

David Dippolino
Before the Appropriations Committee Hearing on
Governor's Proposed Budget Affecting Education

March 3, 2015

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is David Dippolino. I am a resident of West Hartford and a teacher in the West Hartford Public School System. There are approximately 250 teachers who share my personal situation as both resident and teacher in West Hartford.

I am here tonight to talk about the disproportion of ECS funds to many towns, especially to West Hartford. ECS is the state's primary grant to towns for its Constitutional obligation to fund local schools based on each town's ability to pay. Over the past 19 years, West Hartford has realized a shortfall of \$301.8 million with a \$31.9 million shortfall in 2014 – 2015. When you look at the shortfall of \$31.9 million to West Hartford and measure this on a per pupil basis, West Hartford has the largest gap by far of any town in Connecticut. This amount of \$31.9 million converts to a gap of \$3,015 per student.

As a taxpayer, teacher and parent of a former West Hartford student this is an undue burden that is being placed on the residents of our city. In West Hartford, we repeatedly hear the refrain from parents that they move to West Hartford for the quality public neighborhood school system. I too, moved to town eleven years ago just for that reason. Our quality system is in jeopardy. We have increasing diversity in terms of wealth, race, and special needs students; yet, the state budget your committee is being asked to approve shortchanges my students by \$3,015 individually.

To look at this shortfall in another way, ECS should pay for about 35% of West Hartford's school budget. Currently it covers about 12%, leaving the rest to local taxpayers, like myself. This means that the average home owner pays about \$1,500 more in local property taxes to cover the costs that should be paid by the state and is being paid to most other towns.

As a resident and a teacher I am being affected multiple times due to the state's shortfall. My work life is directly affected because my districts ability to maintain their excellence is at risk due to repeated budget problems that affect supplies, programing abilities, capital improvement projects, class size, my salary and

benefits. My home life is affected because I am being asked to make up for the state's shortcomings by paying increased property taxes. The governor's proposed budget is squeezing me, the middle class. I urge you to fully fund ECS statewide on a yearly basis moving forward. Myself and the residents of this state expect you to meet your constitutional burden of providing a free and appropriate education. Fully funding ECS will also provide property tax relief raising the middle class.