

Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing  
March 3rd, 2015

**Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget**

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

My name is Bruce Douglas, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). CREC provides extensive educational support services throughout the state of Connecticut and operates 19 high-performing interdistrict magnet schools in the greater Hartford area. However, I am here today to testify in support of the best interests of **all** of Connecticut's children and families.

Tonight, you will hear from many passionate students, families, and teachers from our magnet schools; and you will hear from equally passionate families, students, and teachers from Connecticut's charter schools and public schools. All of these families want your support for same thing: great schools.

Over the past 20 years, the General Assembly and consecutive executive administrations have inadvertently incentivized dysfunction in public education by pitting local school districts, magnet schools, and charter schools against one another. Connecticut's schools should be focused on the important work of teaching and learning; but instead, they are fearful that they won't have the basic funding necessary to provide a quality education, and resort to challenging the validity of one another. This is a sad and immoral situation, as all of these schools are funded with public dollars. All children must have access to a high-quality public education, and all schools must be funded appropriately.

The state of Connecticut created magnet schools and charter schools through legislation passed by this body – not to compete with local districts, but to solve problems of racial isolation and lack of choice among urban residents. This is the Constitution State, yet after twenty years, the Sheff vs. O'Neill lawsuit has not been settled. In fact, throughout Connecticut there are many towns and cities where children and families are in despair because of the lack of adequate education funding and opportunities. These communities are facing the same conditions that led to Sheff vs. O'Neill.

The Connecticut approach of small towns vs. small cities is tribal. The town that a child resides in should not change their right to a high-quality education. When I was a teacher, I remember being told to report nonresident children in my class for theft of education. How can a Connecticut citizen steal a public education? Imagine if emergency rooms in hospitals asked for your town of residence before offering you a life-saving treatment! Education is an emergency and needs to be approached with a sense of urgency. We have 25 emergency rooms in each CREC school – they are call classrooms. And the physicians are called great teachers.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Bruce E. Douglas, Ph.D.

Our school districts are suffering. They are suffering from years of poor management, from an environment of politics-before-children, and from poor leadership at all levels of our education system. This has resulted in children being denied their constitutional rights. At the same time, teachers have been insulted, over managed, under lead, and poorly supplied.

Continued failure to provide financial support to our schools has resulted in a weakened State Department of Education, in failed task forces, in an Education Cost Sharing formula that is not only broken, but not followed, and in the largest and most enduring achievement gap in the nation.

Eleven percent of Connecticut's children are enrolled in public schools of choice – magnet schools and charter schools – yet the state has not increased magnet school funding for the past five years. You know, as we all do, that by not funding public magnet schools, the state passes the costs on to local school districts. When the magnet schools were created, the state agreed to pay 85% of the cost, and districts would pay 15%. Today, the state is paying 70%, while the district share has doubled.

We must sustain the investment Connecticut has made in high-quality, integrated magnet schools. And, we must create a fair and reliable funding system for the State Department of Education, public neighborhood schools, public magnet schools, and public charter schools.

It is time for us to work together to advocate for and financially support all good schools in our state; and it is time for us to call all children “our children”.

## RESC Sheff Magnet School Funding History and Projections

- RESC-operated magnet schools in the Sheff region have not received an increase in per pupil funding from the state since FY 2010. Magnet schools have received the same funding for **five years: \$10,443** per child.
- Over the same five-year period, statewide ECS funding was increased by an average of **1.9% per year**.
- If RESC-operated Sheff magnet schools had been sustainably funded since 2011, with the same annual funding increases as ECS statewide, magnet school tuition would be **\$11,490** per pupil in 2015-16 (**\$1,047 more than current levels**)<sup>\*</sup>.
- If RESC-operated Sheff magnet schools had been sustainably funded since 2011, with the same annual increase as ECS funding given to cities and towns in the greater Hartford area, magnet school tuition would be \$11,528 per child in 2015-16 (**\$1,085 more than current levels**)<sup>\*</sup>.
- If RESC-operated magnet schools had been sustainably funded since 2011, with the same annual increase in ECS funding given to CAUS (Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents), magnet school tuition would be \$11,985 in 2015-16 (**\$1,542 more than current levels**)<sup>\*</sup>.
- RESC-operated magnet schools do not have a tax base that can be used to raise additional funds. When the state does not increase funding to magnet schools, RESCs must raise tuition charges to local school districts in order to remain solvent.
- Since FY 2010, the state has gradually transferred the financial burden of magnet schools to local towns. In FY 2011, the state's per pupil funding of CREC magnet schools was **73%** of the total cost of educating a child. In FY 2015, the state funded **70%** of the total cost. **This is a difference of \$397 per child or a total added cost to local school districts of \$2.9 million**<sup>\*</sup>.
- If all RESC-operated magnet schools were to receive a **\$1,000.00** per-pupil increase from the state, the cost would be approximately **\$11.3 million**<sup>\*</sup>.

\*Projections based on 2013 enrollment data provided by the State Department of Education.

♦ Based on historical ECS data from the State Department of Education