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Connecticut Education Association

Governance
Sheila Cohen, President
Jeff Leake, Vice President
Pat Jordan, Secretary
Thomas Nicholas, Treasurer
John Horrigan, NEA Director
Gary Peluchette, NEA Director

Executive Office
Mark Waxenberg
Executive Director
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-525-5641 800-842-4316
Fax 860-725-6388

An affiliate of the
National Education Association

Mark Waxenberg
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2015

Governor's Proposed Budget Affecting Education

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mark Waxenberg, Executive Director for the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state. I am testifying today on the impact of Governor Malloy's proposed budget on Connecticut schools.

CEA recognizes that since 2010, and in the wake of significant recessionary challenges, Governor Malloy's budgeting commitment to education was laudable. The governor increased funding to education through the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant and targeted resources to early childhood education as a stepping stone to success. However, the commitments to these critical grants, including progress toward fully funding ECS, must not be compromised. Additionally, numerous grant programs that make a real difference in the daily lives of children must be maintained.

Network Schools

CEA supports the basic premise behind the Commissioner's Network Schools. With focused attention, collaborative planning, and an infusion of resources targeted for improvement, schools can help children facing the greatest challenges overcome socio-economic barriers to success.

The governor's budget increases the potential number of Network Schools, but proposes to do so with a significant cut in overall funding for this initiative. To ensure the implementation of innovative plans, the funding of additional Network Schools in this budget should reflect current per school funding levels, and not be cut.

Community Schools and CommPACT School Funding

CEA believes that schools must be about more than simply what happens in the classroom. Schools, especially those in Alliance District or designated as Network Schools, must be innovative in marshaling health, counseling, tutoring, services, and other "wrap-around" services that support students' daily readiness for learning. CEA believes that a "Community Schools" model can cost-effectively address this broad spectrum of children's needs, especially for students facing the greatest challenges.

Over the past eight years, the state has supported the Community Schools model by funding CommPACT Schools at $475,000 through the Neag School of Education at UCONN. The CommPACT program – CommPACT stands for Community, Parents, Administrators, Children, and Teachers – facilitates the development and administration of the community schools model. It is currently operating in four urban school districts. Unfortunately, Governor Malloy's budget entirely eliminates this funding.

For your convenience, a write-up of an existing Community School developed using CommPACT funding, O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford, is attached.

SDE Programmatic Education Grants

Consistent with the Community Schools approach, the State Department of Education administers a number of programs that provide "wrap-around" type services to students. Unfortunately, the proposed budget eliminates many of these services, including

Early Reading and other literacy programs
Summer and extended school hours
School nutrition enhancements
Targeted adult education Programs
School health programs
Cost efficiency grants
Wrap-around services
Youth centers
Youth Service Bureaus
LEAP grants
Parent Trust Fund
Science grants

CEA urges the Education Committee to reject these program eliminations, implement the Community School model in Network Schools, and promote the model's use in other schools serving children with the greatest needs.

ECS Funding and Charter Schools

One significant benefit of the Community and CommPACT school model is that its positive results can accrue to all children in a school. Community and CommPACT school model is an investment in educational improvement that reinvests in communities and does not take from Peter to give to Paul. This is in contrast to other state spending commitments, such as with the recent expansion of charter schools in Connecticut, that divert funding away from school improvement and into a parallel charter school system.

The expansion of a parallel charter school system has resulted in a draining of needed resources from traditional neighborhood public schools. This occurs in two ways.

At a time when state funding for education should lift all boats equally, the state has committed a disproportionately larger amount of new tax dollars to charter schools. This increased commitment comes at the expense of the 119 municipalities continually receiving far less school funding than is owed to them by the state via the ECS grant.

Under the governor's proposed budget, the state's commitment to ECS will not increase at all, while funding for charter schools would increase 23%. In fact, in the eight years between 2009 and the proposed amounts for 2017, ECS will increase just 8%, and remain more than $650 million underfunded (see attachment). Meanwhile, proposed funding for charter schools would result in an increase of 169% during that same time.

	Charter Schools	**ECS**
FY09	41,654,700	1,889,182,288
FY10	48,081,000	1,889,609,057
FY11	52,768,200	1,889,609,057
FY12	56,926,400	1,889,609,057
FY13	65,800,200	1,939,654,657
FY14	75,000,000	1,990,615,276
FY15	91,019,000	2,039,625,892
FY16*	102,745,530	2,039,625,892
FY17*	111,977,530	2,039,625,892
Growth 2009-2017	**169%**	**8%**

While Connecticut cities and towns continue to be underfunded, the expansion of charter schools in our cities has a significant impact on local public schools. For example, a recent estimate of the local financial impact of charter schools shows a $2.9 million cost to the Bridgeport Public Schools (see analysis attached). A similar analysis in Stamford shows nearly $700,000 in costs to the local board of education for the addition of one state charter school.

CEA proudly represents three of the state's first charter schools. We continue to support the goal of charter schools envisioned in 1996 when Connecticut's law was first passed: to serve as educational laboratories (limited in number and scale) that could develop and share new best practices with the traditional public school sector. However, it is important that lawmakers not lose sight of the fact that the original legislation sought to prevent creating a parallel system of education. It limited charter school enrollment to 1,000 students statewide. And it did not envision the creation of charter chains and Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) distorting the original intent of the law.

CEA does not support the continued expansion of charter schools nor the disproportionate increases in state funding at the expense of traditional public schools. CEA urges legislators to continue on its path toward fully funding ECS.

Thank you.

ECS Underfunding as of FY 14

Andover	(664,563)	East Hampton	(1,286,530)	Middletown	(13,432,985)
Ansonia	(6,158,072)	East Hartford	(19,345,422)	Milford	(18,344,234)
Ashford	(85,448)	East Haven	(4,727,547)	Monroe	0
Avon	(33,355)	East Lyme	(70,295)	Montville	(2,890,188)
Barkhamsted	(775,526)	Easton	0	Morris	0
Beacon Falls	(1,091,286)	East Windsor	(586,045)	Naugatuck	(6,043,422)
Berlin	(1,725,909)	Ellington	(3,994,798)	New Britain	(32,589,696)
Bethany	(512,623)	Enfield	(8,973,038)	New Canaan	0
Bethel	(777,307)	Essex	0	New Fairfield	(235,819)
Bethlehem	0	Fairfield	0	New Hartford	(1,133,992)
Bloomfield	(3,421,394)	Farmington	0	New Haven	(29,972,291)
Bolton	(349,422)	Franklin	0	Newington	(7,281,684)
Bozrah	(378,529)	Glastonbury	(7,557,064)	New London	(7,854,618)
Branford	(4,269,321)	Goshen	0	New Milford	(2,544,600)
Bridgeport	(37,580,877)	Granby	(3,236,219)	Newtown	(4,713,985)
Bridgewater	0	Greenwich	0	Norfolk	0
Bristol	(12,717,176)	Griswold	(2,046,818)	North Branford	(1,488,160)
Brookfield	(39,014)	Groton	0	North Canaan	0
Brooklyn	(1,583,284)	Guilford	0	North Haven	(4,507,794)
Burlington	(2,172,056)	Haddam	(2,553,057)	North Stonington	0
Canaan	0	Hamden	(19,196,638)	Norwalk	(3,755,788)
Canterbury	0	Hampton	0	Norwich	(9,923,772)
Canton	(1,999,883)	Hartford	(30,405,300)	Old Lyme	0
Chaplin	(8,839)	Hartland	0	Old Saybrook	0
Cheshire	(7,133,958)	Harwinton	(757,198)	Orange	(4,052,216)
Chester	(459,030)	Hebron	(2,569,396)	Oxford	(560,669)
Clinton	0	Kent	0	Plainfield	(1,942,521)
Colchester	(2,071,811)	Killingly	(1,546,907)	Plainville	(2,833,338)
Colebrook	(96,357)	Killingworth	(411,167)	Plymouth	(2,031,198)
Columbia	(549,154)	Lebanon	0	Pomfret	(362,239)
Cornwall	0	Ledyard	(1,904,445)	Portland	(2,556,901)
Coventry	(941,280)	Lisbon	0	Preston	0
Cromwell	(3,884,572)	Litchfield	(475,203)	Prospect	(1,555,239)
Danbury	(31,506,900)	Lyme	0	Putnam	(935,761)
Darien	0	Madison	0	Redding	0
Deep River	(459,607)	Manchester	(14,362,999)	Ridgefield	0
Derby	(4,473,505)	Mansfield	(1,222,074)	Rocky Hill	(5,231,020)
Durham	(371,953)	Marlborough	(1,661,940)	Roxbury	0
Eastford	0	Meriden	(17,264,193)	Salem	0
East Granby	(1,371,476)	Middlebury	(1,152,878)	Salisbury	0
East Haddam	(779,395)	Middlefield	(529,903)	Scotland	0

Seymour	(3,302,784)	Thomaston	(1,362,863)	West Haven	(16,421,753)
Sharon	0	Thompson	(429,573)	Weston	0
Shelton	(6,905,138)	Tolland	(2,003,230)	Westport	0
Sherman	0	Torrington	(8,985,425)	Wethersfield	(11,044,350)
Simsbury	(6,592,739)	Trumbull	(5,519,461)	Willington	(451,260)
Somers	(2,704,447)	Union	(2,435)	Wilton	0
Southbury	(5,264,556)	Vernon	(8,401,932)	Winchester	(227,827)
Southington	(8,553,481)	Voluntown	0	Windham	(7,068,718)
South Windsor	(2,437,660)	Wallingford	(2,809,253)	Windsor	(3,915,645)
Sprague	(481,940)	Warren	0	Windsor Locks	(1,865,959)
Stafford	(1,551,369)	Washington	0	Wolcott	(584,586)
Stamford	(10,751,452)	Waterbury	(54,703,481)	Woodbridge	(633,544)
Sterling	(1,096,518)	Waterford	0	Woodbury	(2,371,917)
Stonington	0	Watertown	(3,477,496)	Woodstock	(536,171)
Stratford	(15,853,103)	Westbrook	0		**(687,615,280)**
Suffield	(4,567,837)	West Hartford	(37,681,291)		

CHARTER SCHOOLS - FISCAL ANALYSIS
2014-15 SCHOOL YEAR

Schools	Total # Bus Routes	# Bus Routes Added 2014-15	# School Days	Transp NOTES	TRANSP COST	SPED TR FTE at Charter School	Special Ed Teachers (annual cost billed by the Charter School to BPS)	Additional Services Provided by BPS through BPS-employed staff: FTE			Value of Services Provided by BPS-employed staff			GRAND TOTAL
								Social Worker Service	Psychologist Service	Speech Language Service	Social Worker	Psychologist	Speech Language	
Bridge Academy	6	0	182 D	Tiered-50%	198,351	2	223,330	0.00	0.20	0.10	0	22,333	11,167	455,180
New Beginnings	6	0	182 D	Tiered-50%	198,351	2	223,330	0.50	0.20	0.30	55,833	22,333	33,500	533,346
Park City Prep	6	1	182 D	Tiered-50%	198,351	2	178,664	0.50	0.20	0.20	55,833	22,333	22,333	477,513
Achievement First	12	3	191 D	Partial Tier - 182D	435,936	3	334,995	1.00	0.40	0.80	111,665	44,666	89,332	1,016,594
Great Oak	2	2	200 D	No Tier-100%	145,312	1	111,665	0.00	0.20	0.00	0	22,333	0	279,310
Stamford Academy					0		0	0.50	0.20	0.00	55,833	22,333	0	78,166
Side by Side					0		0	0.00	0.00	0.50	0	0	55,833	55,833
Total	32	6			1,176,301	10	1,071,984	2.50	1.40	1.90	279,163	156,331	212,164	2,895,942
											647,657			

NOTE:
Transportation for Achievement First was calculated at 182 days (BOE) plus 9 additional days.
Transportation for Great Oak was calculated for 200 days.

Cost Factor	2014-15	Res Tr	SW	Psy	Sp Lang
	Salary	71,000	80,000	79,000	71,000
	Benefits	21,836	21,836	21,836	21,836
	Total	111,665	111,665	111,665	111,665

Bronx School for Excellence Charter Application
Cost Estimate
District is responsible for "Like Transportation" and Special Education

Year		**2015-16**
Grade	Pre-K	56
	K	56
	1	56
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
		168
Est Sp Ed Students		18
Administration		$ 10,000
Sp Ed Teachers		1.0
$cost		$ 70,000
Pupil Services		
Speech& Language		0.4
Social Work		0.4
Psychology		0.4
		1.2
$cost		$ 84,000
Sp Ed Para		1.0
$ cost		40,000
Transportation		
6 buses x $80,000		$ 480,000
Total SPS cost		**$ 684,000**

From the CEA Advisor February - March 2015 ...

CommPACT Community School model: An exemplar for student and family success

Effectively engaging parents and community members is a challenge for many schools, but it's one that Robert J. O'Brien STEM Academy in East Hartford, a Network School, has taken on eagerly—and successfully. Thanks to the support of CommPACT, an enhanced community school model in place this year, the school is reaching out to families and the community and providing effective programs, including support services that address problems that make it hard for children to learn.

The community school is concerned about the whole child, including his or her environment and family needs. As such, it provides parents with the resources and services to assist them and their children both socially and academically, offering opportunities for a better future for students and their families.

"We are providing programming based on the needs of our families and the support services they've identified, including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, access to Husky health care, and other programs," said literacy coach and Family Engagement Collaborative Co-Chair Kara Levenduski.

Recently the school held several health-related workshops, including a session on lead poisoning prevention and a breast cancer detection screening program that may have saved at least one parent's life. Family and Community Outreach Coordinator, Margie Williams, said parents were quick to say thank you for the free mammogram services when Hartford Hospital's Digital Mobile Mammography bus visited the school.

Parents told Williams they did not have access to health care and would never have had a mammogram if the school didn't provide this free program.

"For one parent, there was follow-up testing needed, which she was able to receive. Thankfully her diagnosis was good. Thanks to the program and the school's focus on family, she is now connected to testing and cancer care resources," said Williams.

Community school

O'Brien is part of the CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative. CommPACT—which stands for Community, Parents, Administrators, Children, and Teachers—promotes meaningful family and community engagement in schools based on research and best practices. Working collaboratively, CommPACT guides each school's success by providing resources, materials, and technical assistance.

CommPACT is run by a board of directors that includes CEA and other education stakeholder groups. It has been successful in several Connecticut schools over the last six years, empowering parent and community voices to get involved and make positive changes. Most recently, CommPACT has transitioned into a new initiative with a defined focus on community school

resources, and it is one approach that Connecticut commissioner's Network Schools can select for their turnaround plans.

"Our goal is for our schools, families, and community groups to work together to support learning and student success," said CommPACT Director Michele Femc-Bagwell. "It is a collaborative process that incorporates and embraces all stakeholders' visions."

Resources for families

In early February, O'Brien, a K-6 elementary school with a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focus for grades four to six, unveiled a new CommPACT-supported family resource center aimed at increasing family and community engagement.

More than two dozen parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and policymakers showed their support for the program by attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony and official opening of the O'Brien STEM Academy Family Resource Center.

Teacher Monique Butler said she is grateful to have the resource center because of the home/school connection. "It allows parents to be participants in their child's education, helping learning continue at home and providing support in the classroom."

O'Brien Principal Lesley Morgan-Thompson said the new resource center is "a great beginning use of Network and CommPACT resources." She called the resource center, a former workroom for staff, "a beautiful space that shows what we can do to support parents."

"Hunger, homelessness, medical needs, and other non-academic obstacles can get in the way of a child's success in school," said CEA President Sheila Cohen. "School-based resource centers ensure that needed supports are provided to children and families to remove barriers that can hinder a child's opportunity for academic success."

The resource center, which is open before, during, and after school, is a place for parents to seek assistance with social, economic, health, and education-related issues. It contains a wide range of tools, including computers, CDs, books, and supplies, for parents and their children.

"There are a lot of working parents facing many difficult challenges, and this resource center can help them with everything from housing to employment searches, medical issues, and education," said CommPACT Family and Community Engagement Specialist Jocelyn Ault.

With the additional funding that comes with the Network School designation, O'Brien hired Williams, a family and community outreach coordinator, to provide programs and services to parents, including evening ESL classes taught by Trinity College staff and students.

"We want parents to know they can come into the resource center, see us, and get help with whatever they may need," said Williams.

Parental support

"Education starts at home, and this program allows parents to have an essential role in what is happening in their child's school," said Levenduski.

Will Alcover, the father of an 8-year old O'Brien student, supports the resource center because he said he understands that "it's important to be involved with my child's school and education."

Kinyarda Davis, the mother of two children at O'Brien and chair of the School Governance Council, said the center strives to provide an inviting, warm atmosphere where parents feel welcome and comfortable to come, get the information or help they need, and get involved.

"The center can help parents with whatever they need and can help minimize any challenging or stressful situation," said Davis. "I am currently in college, job hunting, and using the tools and literature in the resource center. They are very useful to me."

"I hope that parents utilize the resources available in the center, but, more importantly, I hope they use the center as a means to communicate with teachers and administrators, and to assist students at home and support classroom activities," said Butler.

"This resource center provides families and parents another outlet to help them navigate their way through our system," said State Representative Jeff Currey.

Currey, who grew up in East Hartford and attended public schools, said it's all about connecting parents with schools.

"I would love to see every parent walk through this resource center at least once. It can benefit everyone in town."

Community Support

With support from the community, the resource center also provides food to families in need.

"We started the food pantry after teachers noticed many of their students were coming to school hungry," said Williams.

O'Brien provides more than 75 percent of its student with free-and reduced-price lunch during the school week, but teachers were concerned about students on the weekends. They also worried about younger siblings who are not yet in school.

Williams reached out to community members, including Whole Foods in Glastonbury, for support. Residents and community members drop off food items, and every month Whole Foods delivers enough nonperishable food items to fill two large cabinets in the resource center pantry.

Williams said right now they are helping to feed 8 to 10 families in need. She hopes that as word gets out about the program, they will be helping even more families and providing free pantry items like spaghetti, rice, beans, peanut butter, and so much more.

"It's all confidential," she said. "I send flyers home with students, and parents call me, come in, tell me how many children are in the family, and we provide them with food. It's an easy process with no forms or hassles, just help for O'Brien students and their families.That's what the resource center is all about."

Involved parents benefit children

Research shows that children have greater academic success when their parents are actively involved in their education. According to one such study from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory on parent involvement over the past decade, students with involved parents are more likely to excel regardless of family income or background. They earn higher grades and enroll in higher-level programs, attend school regularly, have better skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.

"It is imperative for parents to be committed to their child's education," said Butler. "Students can have difficulty engaging in classroom work when there is minimal parental involvement. Our

students are ecstatic when they see their parents enter the building. To see their parents learning and being here for them fills their hearts and boosts their self-esteem."

East Hartford Board of Education member Tyron Harris said the new O'Brien Parent Resource Center provides much-needed services to families and students and is a way to keep communication channels open.

"Parental involvement is very important," he said. "When parents are involved, they help their children, and education continues at home."

Fellow Board of Education member Marilyn Pet agreed. She said O'Brien's goal is to emulate the success of the community resource center in place at the middle school.

"This resource center will help meet the vision of the school, parents, and community all working together to encourage participation and help direct the school," said Pet. But, she added, it will take time. "It doesn't happen overnight."

Moving forward

Through a process organized by CommPACT, O'Brien is forming family engagement coalitions, made up of parents and teachers, to look at ideas for improving family and community engagement at their schools. Their suggestions will be turned into a vision statement and action plan. The coalitions will also survey families to better ascertain what resources and programs would best meet their needs.

Femc-Bagwell said, "The CommPACT Collaborative will be meeting to finalize a vision statement based on a visioning activity that was recently conducted with over 50 parents, teachers, and community members. This feedback in alignment with surveys that the Family Engagement Committee has administered, will be foundational for developing an action plan that outlines programming and activity needs based on teacher, parent, and community recommendations."

Photo 1

Phote2

Photo1: Principal Lesley Morgan-Thompson (left) and Margie Williams, a family and community outreach coordinator, cut the ribbon officially opening the O'Brien STEM Academy Family Resource Center.

Photo2: Left to right, teacher Monique Butler, parent Kinyarda Davis, and CommPACT Director Michele Femc-Bagwell attended the opening of the new resource center at O'Brien STEM Academy.

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Connecticut Voters Embrace Support Charter School Reform

New Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Accountability Proposals

March 3rd, 2015

Amidst the rapid expansion of charter schools in Connecticut, a new poll shows that Connecticut voters overwhelmingly favor a series of proposals to reform charter schools in ways that make them more transparent, more accountable and that protect neighborhood public schools.

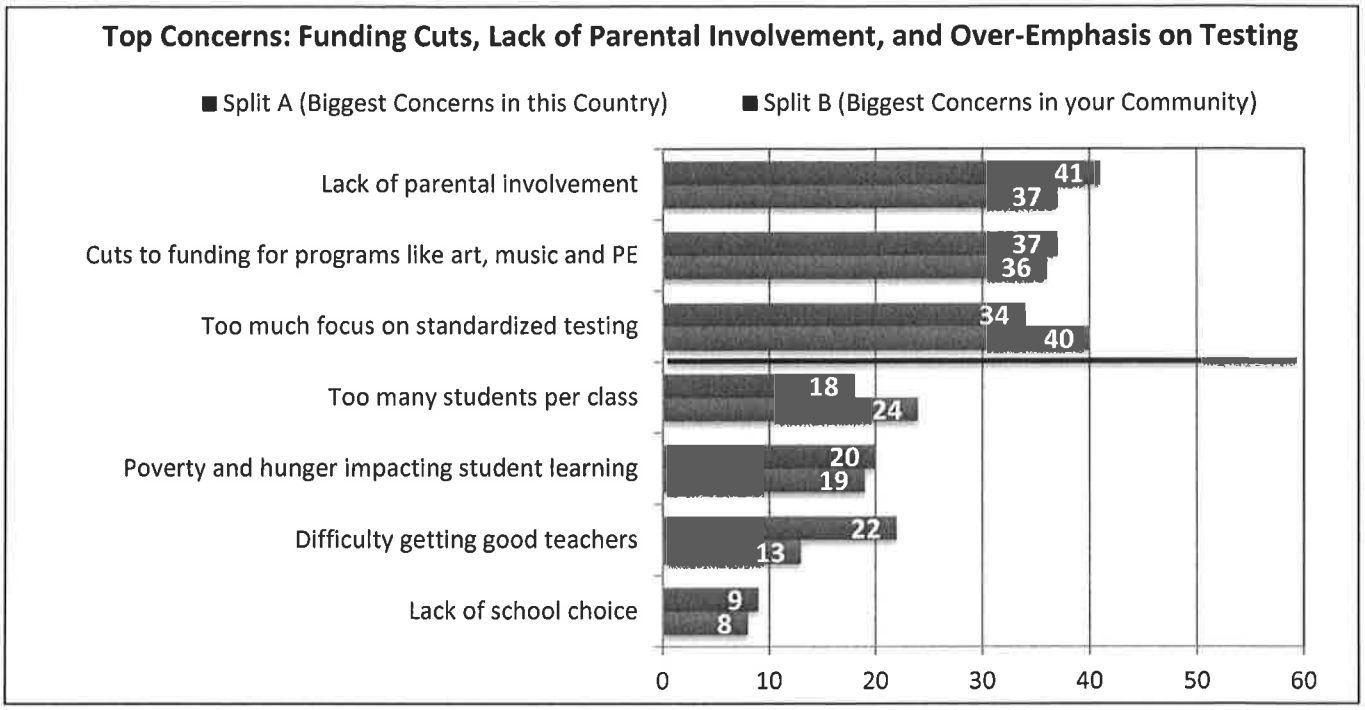
Proposals garnering broad support include initiatives to strengthen charter school accountability and transparency, improve teacher training and qualifications, prevent fraud, serve high-need students, require local boards to approve of new charter schools, and ensure that neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

The following are key findings from the Connecticut poll of 500 registered voters, which was conducted January 29 - 31, 2015. The poll was conducted by GBA Strategies on behalf of the Connecticut Education Association.

Key Findings

- **Voters have positive views of their neighborhood public schools.** 76% of voters rate the quality of education at public schools in their neighborhood as excellent or good, while just 19% rate them fair or poor.

- **Lack of school choice does not register as a top concern**. Voters focus on lack of parental involvement, cuts to school funding, and over-emphasis on testing as the biggest problems facing K-through-12 education. Lack of school choice ranks dead last on their list of concerns.



- **Voters overwhelmingly favor charter school reform proposals.** Huge majorities of voters favor proposals to strengthen transparency and accountability, teacher training and qualifications, anti-fraud measures, ensuring high-need students are served, require local boards to approve of new charter schools, and making sure neighborhood public schools are not adversely affected.

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY PROPOSALS

✓ ***Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to open board meetings to parents and the public, similar to public school board meetings***. A near unanimous 88% favor this proposal and it enjoys bipartisan support (95% of Democrats, 85% of Independents, 85% of Republicans).

✓ ***Require state officials to conduct regular audits of charter schools' finances to detect fraud, waste or abuse of public funds***. 88% also support this proposal, including 87% of parents.

✓ ***Require companies and organizations that manage charter schools to release to parents and the public how they spend taxpayer money, including their annual budgets and contracts***. 81% of voters and 86% of parents favor this transparency proposal.

✓ ***Stop the creation of new charter schools if state officials have not shown the ability to prevent fraud and mismanagement***. Overall, 77% favor this proposal and it garners bipartisan support (81% of Democrats, 78% of Independents, and 70% of Republicans).

PROPOSALS TO PROTECT NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- ✓ ***Ensure that neighborhood public schools do not lose funding when new charter schools open in their area.*** 8-in10 voters back this proposal, including 84% of Independent voters. 79% also favor a proposal requiring that before any new charter school is approved, an analysis must be conducted on the impact the school will have on neighborhood public schools.

- ✓ ***Require a charter school approved by the state of CT to also be approved by your local board of education before it can open in your area.*** Nearly 3-in-4 voters (73%) favor this local control proposal, including 75% of public school parents.

PROPOSALS REGARDING TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SERVING HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

- ✓ ***Require all charter school teachers to meet the same standards and attain state licensing and certification just like teachers in traditional public schools.*** A massive 86 percent favor this proposal because they do not want to lower the bar for charter school teachers. This proposal receives equal support (86%) from parents and non-parents alike.

- ✓ ***Require charter schools to serve high-need students such as special education students, at the same level as neighborhood public schools.*** More than 3-in-4 voters (76%) favor this proposal, including 79% of parents.

Methodology

GBA Strategies conducted a poll in Connecticut of 500 registered voters January 29 - 31, 2015, on behalf of In the Public Interest and the Center for Popular Democracy. The sample is subject to a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The sample was pulled from a Connecticut voter file and phone numbers were selected randomly, providing a statistically representative sample. The poll was administered by professional interviewers via telephone with respondents being reached on cell phones and landlines.