

**TO: Honorable Sen. Beth Bye and Rep. Toni Walker,
And the Members of the Appropriations Committee**

Testimony in **FAVOR** of **SB816**

An Act Establishing a Minimum Level of Funding Under the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula

Thursday, April 2, 2015

I am providing testimony in favor of SB816 as a taxpayer, parent and educator. A fair and equitable education for all children is one of our most important responsibilities and should not be taken lightly.

In the case of Horton v. Meskill (1977): the CT Supreme Court ruled that public education was a state responsibility and each child had the right to an equal opportunity to receive a suitable educational experience. It ruled that a system of school financing that relied on local property tax revenues without regard to disparities in town wealth and lacked significant equalizing state support was unconstitutional.

When Haddam's biggest taxpayer Connecticut Yankee Nuclear Power Plant shut down permanently over 15 years ago, our grand list dropped dramatically, but our ECS allocation was never adjusted upward for that loss. **Haddam is being funded as if the power plant was still in operation.**

Again, Haddam is in the position where they must raise more tax revenue or go without by cutting programs, increasing class sizes, and/or eliminate the resources and supplies teachers need to meet the required twenty-first century educational outcomes. It is becoming harder and more burdensome for Haddam to adequately fund both the schools and town government.

This unfair and inequitable system also indirectly pits municipalities against one another, creating winners and losers with a formula that is supposed to do the opposite by making the system equal and fair for all.

With respect to the ECS formula, there are currently 19 significantly underfunded towns throughout the state. These towns receive less than 50% of the amount required by the formula and Haddam is one of them.

Specifically in Haddam, which at 42% is the **tenth worst funded** out of all 169 municipalities, we receive millions less per year than our neighboring towns. The direct effect of the unequal distribution of ECS funds makes it extremely hard to compete for businesses due to a higher mill rate and we go without when it comes to many necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements to our schools and municipal properties.

Our children and residents should not be penalized when something beyond their control occurs that causes the grand list to drop so drastically and the ECS formula does not take that dramatic drop into account.

With the knowledge that the formula has complications, a fair place to start fixing the problem would be to fund the most underfunded communities up to the 50% mark.

This bill will be the first step in getting the ECS funding formula back on track and will show the people of Connecticut you truly intend to make the system fair once again.

Thank you for taking the time to discuss this important issue.

Sincerely,



Michael K. Barile
Haddam, Connecticut