



April 2, 2015

**TESTIMONY CONCERNING:
SB NO. 816 AN ACT ESTABLISHING MINIMUM LEVEL OF FUNDING UNDER THE EDUCATION
COST SHARING GRANT FORMULA**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

As Chief Financial Officer for New Haven Public Schools, I submit written testimony in reference to the Senate Bill 816, which would establish that no town receive less than fifty per cent of the education cost sharing grant adjusted fully funded formula. While I understand the intent of this bill, and recognize that many districts are feeling the financial pressure of an under-funded state ECS formula, I do not believe this bill is a comprehensive solution to the larger problem of education funding in Connecticut. New Haven Public Schools would like to see that 100% of public school systems receive 100% of the education funding they require based on student need. Anything short of that is yet another band aid on an already patched-up-education funding model in our state.

Let us recognize that Connecticut's school funding formula is not working. At present, the state uses 11 different formulas to fund its public schools. In addition, ECS only includes a weight for poverty, and the other formulas do not take students' learning needs into account at all. Finally, ECS has never been fully funded, and is not likely to be in the foreseeable future which is unfortunate. Fully funding ECS would be the most comprehensive solution to truly meeting the needs of Connecticut students and honoring the right to education afforded by the Connecticut Constitution.

Based on data available to NHPS, what we can observe three facts regarding SB NO 816:

1. 16 districts receive less than 50% of their FY15 Adjusted Fully Funded formula, with Orange at the low end with 22% and Newtown at just under 49%
2. Another 74 districts are receiving between 50% and 85%, which is an important high-end for New Haven, as 85% is where we rank.
3. The remaining 79 districts are receiving over 85% of their Adjusted Fully Funded formula.

As is clear, there isn't a normal distribution here, or set of discernable reasons why ECS has been distributed this way. While it is tempting to solve for those 16 districts who appear to be on the low end of the funding spectrum, the challenge is that 50%, just like 22% and 85%, appears to be an arbitrary figure.

In summary, I share the concern for the 16 affected districts, but feel that only a comprehensive funding solution is the right thing for Connecticut.

Respectfully,
Victor De La Paz