



East Hartford Education Association

Marcia Ferreira, President

59 Burnside Avenue
East Hartford, CT 06108

Phone: (860) 289- 9234

EHEA.marcia@gmail.com

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Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marcia Ferreira. I am an elementary school teacher in East Hartford, where I serve as a math coach. I am also President of the East Hartford Teachers Association.

I testify in support of SB816 An Act Establishing a Minimum Level of Funding Under the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula.

As you know, the State of Connecticut owes local towns about \$700 million in Education Cost Sharing funds that help pay for local schools. This underfunding significantly impacts our classrooms. In East Hartford, underfunding has meant too few social workers and teachers of ELL and special education. We have kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms without sufficient paraprofessional support to help our youngest and neediest students. We have insufficient parent engagement resources. We teach in hallways and convert closets to offices. We have leaky roofs and building improvements that need to be made.

Too often, teachers in our system, and others, have to reach into our pockets to pay for furniture, easels, and bookcases. We buy paper, glue, crayons, pencils, and "extra things" like art supplies (paint, paint brushes, construction paper, poster board, project materials, etc.). We buy books and even subscriptions to digital resources to help our students. But it's not enough and it's unfair to students, their families, and the educators who are working hard every day to make a difference and make ends meet.

What the state doesn't pay also impacts local property taxes. East Hartford is underfunded by almost \$20 million. According to an analysis by CEA, this equates to about \$650 per year in property taxes for the average homeowner in East Hartford. This is more than three days' pay for the median wage earner. The underfunding that is shortchanging students is shortchanging East Hartford tax payers too.

I support SB816 because it is part of the solution to fixing the state's commitment to fully fund the state's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. SB816 would ensure that no town receives less than 50% of the ECS funds owed to them by the state. Although it would not solve East Hartford's underfunding (we receive 70% of our ECS funding), passing this bill would send a signal that the state recognizes its failure to fairly fund schools. This is a signal that fairer funding will ultimately reach more districts, like East Hartford, that also remain significantly underfunded. On behalf of the teachers that are working tirelessly every day with our neediest students and being asked to do more and more for them without the adequate support they need – I urge you to do all you can to help us in the endeavor that matters most to us – caring for and educating the children of East Hartford and the children in schools across Connecticut.

Marcia Ferreira

President of the East Hartford Education Association