

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

A fair and equitable education for all children is and should be a right to all tax paying Americans. Making sure that my daughter gets the best possible education is one of my most important responsibilities as a mother. I moved here over two years ago as a new business owner in the community. I was dumbfounded at the following information concerning 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 these communities that must either raise more tax revenue or go without, making it much harder to adequately fund both our schools and town government. This unfair and inequitable system also indirectly pits municipalities against one another. This creates winners and losers with a formula that is supposed to do the opposite by making the system equal and fair for all. Specifically in Haddam, which at 42% is the tenth worst funded out of all 169 municipalities, receives millions less per year than our neighboring towns. The direct effect of the unequal distribution of ECS funds is the inability to lure new businesses due to a higher mill rate. The result is a lack of necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements to our schools and municipal properties. When our 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! Why is that? Our children and residents should not be penalized for a large company's disappearance. If the grand list drops, the ECS formula should be modified to take that dramatic drop into consideration. With the knowledge that the formula has complications, a fair place for you 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. My vote and my voice to influence other voters is depending on your willingness to fight for change when injustices occur. My daughter, Harlee Nikola, a kindergartener at Haddam Elementary is looking to you to make sure she gets the education she deserves and needs to survive and flourish in this world. Please help our struggling town that we call home. Thank you for taking the time to discuss and scrutinize this important issue. May God guide you with all his wisdom.

Sincerely,

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