

Thank-you distinguished members of the committee. I attended today's session but could not stay to make comment.

My name is Kimberly Ajavananda and I am the Redding Board of Education Chair. I am here today to give testimony on Education H.B. No. 7019 An ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT.

We do not support this bill as written. The bill requires one significant change before we can support it.

The following is our rationale for support:

-While underfunding of education is a common problem in many Connecticut communities, an increasing number of communities grapple with mitigating the circumstance of rapidly declining enrollment, a circumstance that is projected to continue throughout the decade.

-Current legislation does not provide a sufficient prospect for local taxpayer relief in certain communities that demonstrably secure the State's interests in well-funded, high quality public education.

-The intent of the state law was not to constrain communities that demonstrate a commitment to public schools nor to thwart the ability of school districts to achieve local efficiencies, but these are the unfortunate effects as it was constructed.

-The current \$3K per pupil allowance falls significantly short of realizable savings from enrollment decline in many communities. For instance, in a community spending \$20K per student, the allowance permits only a 15% reduction per student, an amount well below typical estimates of variable costs. Similarly, the current -0.5% maximum reduction in appropriations for education also falls short of realizable saving in many communities facing rapid enrollment decline. For example, in a community encountering 5% annual enrollment declines, even a 50% variable cost estimate suggests realizable savings of 2.5% without impacting service quality.

-Providing MBR relief based on per student spending, rather than any specific dollar amount, makes sense and helps to ensure that, the quality of instruction that is dependent upon factors such instruction time, student-teacher ratios, or essential services including special education are not negatively impacted.

However, we request language be included with respect to the cooperation between the town BoE and the town BoF.

It is essential to preserve continuity in the quality and breadth of school services provided, even for towns and districts seeking relief, hence the importance of conditionality and joint agreement between the Board of Education and the Board of Finance.

We want to ensure this bill does not empower Board's of Finance to reduce education budget by 3% without Board of Education concurrence. This point alone goes against the original intent of the law.