

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



**J. BRENDAN SHARKEY**  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

March 19, 2015

Good Afternoon Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I am here to testify in support of HB7019 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT.

Ten years ago, the legislature enacted a minimum budget requirement (MBR) to ensure that increases in ECS funding were being spent on education. The MBR intended to create a safety net for our school children, not putting the will of local boards above the needs of our students in tough budget years.

That same year, we saw our school enrollment numbers peak with declining enrollment in each of the following school years. We also saw our state open dozens of new open choice schools over this same period. The result today has been a number of school districts struggling under MBR due to declining enrollment.

HB 7019 addresses these issues without sacrificing the intended safety net. The bill provides for more flexibility to school districts with declining enrollment and incentivizes, rather than hamstringing, the laudable goal of cost efficiencies. Under HB 7019, our top-achieving schools will be granted modest flexibility while turnaround districts will not be affected by this legislation.

I support this bill with two suggestions. First, while the 3% trigger for requiring a review from the State Department of Education is thoughtful in spirit, I believe it is still too low and is worthy of further consideration. Second, I believe the flexibility offered to top performing districts should be expanded to the top 10% of excelling districts.

Our current Minimum Budget Requirement has proven too restrictive with our changing school landscape. I respectfully urge your support for HB 7019.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Brendan Sharkey'.

J. Brendan Sharkey  
Speaker of the House of Representatives