CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CCM 2015 Testimony

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 25, 2015

Good afternoon, my name is Gayle Weinstein, First Selectman of the town of Weston. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM).

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 156 towns and cities and over 95% of Connecticut's population.

SB 944, "An Act Establishing a Full-Day Kindergarten Requirement"

SB 944 would require all school districts to provide full-day kindergarten programs beginning in the 2017-2018 school year.

CCM supports the intent of SB 944. We strongly believe in the importance of early childhood education. Expanding kindergarten to a full day for all students will help level the playing field across all municipalities, and give Connecticut's youngest learners the necessary time in the classroom as they begin their educational experience.

However, we have concerns regarding the fiscal impact of this proposed, new state mandate. More time in the classroom translates into additional costs for staffing and supplies. Both the start-up and ongoing costs needed to comply with this proposal, particularly in an economy of limited resources, could be problematic for certain communities.

Therefore, CCM recommends that the committee amend SB 944 to include an expansion of the Smart Start Program to provide the financial capability for communities to develop full-day kindergartens. A commitment to fund a portion of the additional costs for a period of up to 3 years would allow a reasonable, phased-in approach that would help all towns and cities achieve a shared goal of enhanced local public education.

CCM urges the committee to **amend SB 944 as recommended above**, and then favorably report the bill.

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If you have any questions, please contact Bob Labanara, State Relations Manager, CCM at rlabanara@ccm-ct.org or (203) 498-3000.