

**Testimony of Patricia Charles, Ed.D., Superintendent, Middletown Schools
Raised Bill No.1056**

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXCESS COST THRESHOLD AND THE COLLECTION
OF DATA RELATING TO PER PUPIL COSTS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION.***

Good evening Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Lavielle, Senator Bartolomeo, and Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

I am offering testimony in support of the phase-in changes to the excess cost threshold for special education and to require the Department of Education to annually collect and report data relating to local special education expenditures.

A number of years ago the State eliminated a general special education reimbursement grant to local districts. Currently, the State underfunds the only remaining special education grant which is designed to provide financial relief to districts that incur excessively expensive program placements for students with special needs.

The rising cost of special education services and the increase in students who require specialized placements and programs to meet their academic, social and emotional needs is significant. By phasing in a plan to more fully fund the cost of educating our most needy special education students, you would be alleviating a great burden districts face when meeting the needs of these students. Because of the cap placed on the excess cost grant in recent years districts are uncertain of the reimbursement amount. When the state's share exceeds the appropriation, it reduces the grant to each district. SB Bill 1056 would allow districts to plan appropriately and to gradually return this commitment of special education reimbursement to the State.

Additionally, I ask you to consider the formula used to calculate the per pupil cost. Middletown's per pupil expenditure number has increased this year from \$14,055 to \$15,001. While districts like Middletown are grateful for the Alliance Grant, it has a negative impact for our ECS threshold amount. The total grant funding the Board receives is included in the formula to calculate the per pupil cost. The additional Alliance money increased the total expenditure amount and that was the main reason for the increase in the per pupil cost.

This adversely affects our special education reimbursement. When we multiply the per pupil allocation by 4.5, our expenses must achieve a much higher threshold in order to receive money back from the State. The difference for Middletown is \$247,765.

I urge you to support districts at the increasing thresholds outlined in SB 1056 and help districts provide the services our students require without overtaxing our local communities. Further, amend section 10-76g of the general statute to exclude Alliance district funding from the calculation of a board of education's average per student educational costs for the purpose of the excess cost threshold for special education.