



**NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
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February 3, 2015

Catherine Osten, Senator  
Phillip Miller, Representative  
Planning & Development Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Osten and Representative Miller:

I am writing to you in opposition to HB 5085 An Act Authorizing Oversight over Non-educational Expenses in School Budgets By Municipal Boards of Finance.

I am the Business Manager of Newtown Public Schools and have been in this field for over 39 years. I am active in our professional organization CASBO, and have been a past president. The job of managing a public school system is complex and difficult at best. The many competing interests along with mandates, compliance requirements, special needs, and political interests are all legitimate concerns that need to be balanced to be able to provide the best education for our children.

To give municipalities' oversight and control over non-educational expenses in education budgets would diminish the ability of local Boards of Education to exercise full management ability over every aspect of providing our children's education as currently embedded in CGS Section 10-220. In my experience in three municipalities and two regional school districts it is my unequivocal opinion that Municipal Boards of Finance have as their major focus many other aspects of local government. To transfer this responsibility to other political volunteers, who are not experienced, trained or directly knowledgeable of day to day operations that ultimately impact children would be a mistake. Boards of Finance are responsible for the overall planning and direction of their respective town and do not have the skills necessary to protect the educational interests for local communities, that authority is clearly a Board of Educations' as codified in the current statute Section 10-220.

How would one define 'Non-educational Expenses'? Would they be transportation, employee benefits, utilities, supplies, school ground upkeep, food services, building maintenance, technology, security, athletics, etc.?

Often times when direct educational costs, such as Special Education placement needs exceed the amount budgeted, the school district needs to look to these 'Non-educational Expenses' to cover legitimate shortages. The school budget is managed in total by a staff that has knowledge and expertise of the inner workings of the district. They monitor all aspects of an approved budget, which goes through an extensive vetting process, to meet their statutory responsibility to provide an appropriate learning environment for all students'.

To bifurcate this decision making as it relates to certain necessary expenses would be counter-productive, unwise and could lead to decisions that would not be in the best interests of our children.

I ask that you share this testimony with your committee and urge you to reject HB5085 as it provides no clear benefit to the children of Connecticut.

Please feel free to contact me should you require additional information.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ron Bienkowski".

Ron Bienkowski  
Director of Business

cc: Dr. Joseph V. Erardi, Jr., Superintendent