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Testimony before the Planning & Development Committee February 19, 2016 In opposition to: HB 5175 An Act Concerning Local Board of Education Budgets

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of Planning & Development Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 5175

My name is Robert P. Giesen and I am the Business Manager for Regional School District # 12 with over 30 years of experience in this field. I am also a past president of the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO), a non-profit professional organization that represents school business officials (SBOs) that work in most of the 169 towns in Connecticut. SBOs work closely with school boards, administrators, staff, public officials and communities; and are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations

CASBO opposes HB 5175 for the following reasons:

Section 1 of the bill adds language requiring all local boards of education to be audited. This language is unnecessary since all local Boards of Education are already audited annually and these audits are filed with OPM. In addition, all boards of education file Form ED001, a detailed reporting of annual expenditures, to the State Department of Education that is also audited. Full independent audits are all ready performed for all regional school districts. Neither of these changes are needed and, if enacted, will only increase local auditing costs as well as staff salaries in a time when all levels of Connecticut budgets are trying find economies. This will add another unfunded mandate to all local budgets.

Section 2 gives a town board of finance control over non-educational expenses included in the local board of education budget.

This is an unnecessary overreach by the legislature to change the statutory authority rightfully placed on Boards of Education for the implementation of all educational interests for local communities. Specifically, Section 10-220 of the CGS defines the duties of the Board of Education to include "(a) Each local or regional board of education shall maintain good public elementary and secondary schools, implement the educational interests of the state as defined in section 10-4a and provide such other educational activities as in its judgment will best serve the interests of the school districtand provide an appropriate learning environment for its students which includes (1) adequate instructional books, supplies, materials, equipment, staffing, facilities and technology, (2) equitable allocation of resources among its schools, (3) proper maintenance of facilities and (4) a safe school setting. " In order to meet these significant responsibilities, Boards of Education and their staffs must have the authority to exercise full control over every aspect of providing education to our children. To have decision making bifurcated for certain expenses incurred to educate our children would be unwise, counter productive and would possibly lead to decisions that are detrimental to the education of children

- Knowledge and expertise of the inner workings of a school rests with the Board of Education and the staffs that oversee educational needs of the students as defined under CGS Section 10-220 above. To place this responsibility in the hands of others who are not directly knowledgeable of the day-to-day operations that impact children would lead to decisions that are not in the best interests of children.
- The development of education budgets goes through a very thorough vetting and approval process. This includes many meetings with municipal officials, public hearings and in many cases, town referendums. Once the budget is passed it is the BOE's and their staffs' responsibility to implement and monitor the budget to meet the educational needs of the students and not over expend the total appropriation.

For the reasons stated above CASBO believes that HB 5175 will result in another unfunded mandate and interfere with the ability of boards of education to fulfill there statutory responsibilities and impede the delivery of education services to the children of CT. We therefore urge you to reject HB 5175.