



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016**

**HB 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL
YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, I am Ann Gruenberg, a member of the Hampton Board of Education and President of CABE.

While we applaud the commitment to public education demonstrated by the Governor and the Legislature in a time of significant state fiscal constraints, the economic challenges faced at all of levels of government are felt most intensively at the local level – where we are in the middle of the budget development and adoption season. Rising local costs, in addition to the increased expectations to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career, require at least a stable level of investment in public education. Districts and the state have adopted many efficiencies – and continue to look for additional opportunities to deliver high quality education in a cost effective manner. Joint purchasing of fuel, insurance and supplies, shared back office service, joint professional development, coordination of transportation, and sharing of certified staff are just a few of these efficiencies.

CABE is deeply concerned that provisions in HB 5044, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017, will leave local and regional boards of education unable to adequately implement the educational interests of the state. School board members, charged with responsibility for delivering a free and appropriate public education within the budgeted appropriation, are in a unique position to indicate the local impact of some of the budget proposals.

The proposal to reduce ECS grants by \$11.5 million, as well as the reductions in funding for magnet schools, Open Choice, priority school districts, adult education and transportation, will shift the burden to local property taxpayers – or lead to additional program reductions in districts that have had several years of 0% budget increases.

The \$8 million proposed reduction in the Special Education Excess Cost grant comes at a time when school districts are facing rising costs in this area. This was the grant designed as the state's safety net for school districts facing extraordinary individual special education student costs. Increasingly, districts must reduce services to regular education students to fund the special education mandates.

CABE urges you to maintain the current level of support for elementary and secondary education funding to school districts.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our public school students.