



## ***COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION***

February 24, 2016

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

### **SB 175, "An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Department of Education"**

This bill, would among other things, implement a three percent cap on the carry forward provision of the alliance district grant program and revise the eligibility requirements for exemptions to the minimum budget requirement. **CCM has concerns that this bill may negatively impact municipal budgets.**

Education is the largest item in municipal budgets. In some towns it equates to as much as 80% of the municipality's total budget. Declining student enrollment is an issue across Connecticut that directly impacts municipal budgets and the quality of our public education system.

In 2015 the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 15-99 which provided towns and cities with much needed flexibility in the local education budgeting process to address declining student populations. CCM continues to be appreciative of that modification, however we are concerned that the modification to the exemption for the minimum budget requirement in section three of this bill would reduce the ability of towns and cities to fully realize the cost savings associated with Public Act 15-99.

CCM is also concerned regarding the 3% cap on the carry forward provision for alliance districts implemented in section seven of this bill. Alliance districts are frequently located in distressed municipalities that either host a significant amount of tax exempt property or simply do not have the means to generate higher levels of revenue to adequately fund their local education system. **CCM strongly suggest the Committee fully examine the impact a cap on the carry forward provision** may have on alliance districts and consider possible exemptions before moving forward on the provision.

Lastly, it is unclear as to how the addition of categorized school districts in section four of this bill may impact municipal aid for education. CCM seeks clarification as to the purpose of this new language and respectfully asks the Committee to consider the impact on local education systems when voting on this proposal.

CCM urges the Committee to **take no action** on the provisions of SB 175 that are referenced above.

###

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel C. Giungi, Senior Legislative Associate for CCM, at [dgiungi@ccm-ct.org](mailto:dgiungi@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 498-3023.