

**Testimony Regarding
S.B. 376, An Act Concerning State Funding for Education**

Katie Roy, Director & Founder
Committee on Education
Monday, March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding S.B. 376 and its proposal to require the State Department of Education to study issues relating to state funding for education.

My name is Katie Roy and I am the director and founder of the Connecticut School Finance Project. I submit testimony today in favor of S.B. 376 because Connecticut's current school finance system is illogical and inequitable.

Today, Connecticut use 11 different funding formulas or statutory per pupil amounts to distribute funding to public schools, none of which truly take into consideration the learning needs of students or the needs of the schools that serve them.¹

This is particularly apparent with the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula, which is intended to equitably distribute resources to local public school districts. In fiscal year 2014, the state stopped using the ECS formula all together.^{2 3} As a result, the amount of ECS funding a school district receives is driven primarily by the amount of funding the district received last year, and does not take into account changes in enrollment, student need or community wealth.

Connecticut's broken school finance system also extends to the state's schools of choice, where 10 different formulas (or statutory per pupil amounts) are used to fund school choice programs, including: magnet schools, the Connecticut Technical High School System, charter schools, and vocational agriculture programs. Each of these formulas was created independently of the others and none of them take students' learning needs into account.⁴

Not only is arbitrarily funding Connecticut's local public schools a poor budgetary practice, it also results in an inequitable system. When the amount of *state* funding Connecticut's six highest-need school districts (Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, and Waterbury) receive on a per pupil basis is compared, there is

¹ Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 172, § 10-262h (2013).

² An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2015. 18 Conn. Acts 14-47, 30 June 2014.

³ CT Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. (2015) *Funding Status of Education Cost Sharing Grant (ECS) for Towns in FY2014-15*.

⁴ Moran, John, Office of Legislative Research. (2014). *OLR Research Report: Comparison of Charter, Magnet, Agricultural Science Centers, and Technical High Schools* (2014-R-0257). Retrieved from <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2014/rpt/2014-R-0257.htm>.

a \$4,344 per pupil gap between the lowest funded district (New Britain) and the highest funded district (Hartford).⁵ ⁶ Additionally, there is no correlation between a district's per pupil spending and the percentage of low-income students the district serves.⁷ ⁸

Connecticut is facing serious fiscal challenges that will result in the need to make difficult decisions about the state's top priorities and how to fund them in smarter ways. During this difficult time, Connecticut must make budget decisions thoughtfully, not arbitrarily, and that process begins with good information and data.

As a result, I urge the Committee to support S.B. 376.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to submit written testimony, and please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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About the Connecticut School Finance Project

Founded in June 2015, the Connecticut School Finance Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit project that strives to be a trusted and independent source of accurate data and information about how Connecticut funds its public schools. The goals of the Connecticut School Finance Project are to 1) build knowledge about how the current school funding system works, 2) bring together stakeholders who are impacted by how schools are funded, and 3) identify solutions to Connecticut's school funding challenges that are fair to students and taxpayers, and strengthen schools and communities.

⁵ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.

⁶ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2014). *2013-14 End of School Year Report (ED 001) data*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/end-of-year-school-reports-ed001-2009-14>.

⁷ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *2014-15 Net Current Expenditures per Pupil and 2015-16 Excess Cost Grant Basic Contributions*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-public-school-district-spending-per-student-2014-15>.

⁸ Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.

Cities that serve student populations with similar needs receive different amounts of money

FY2013-14 State Revenue (Exc. Construction) Per Pupil



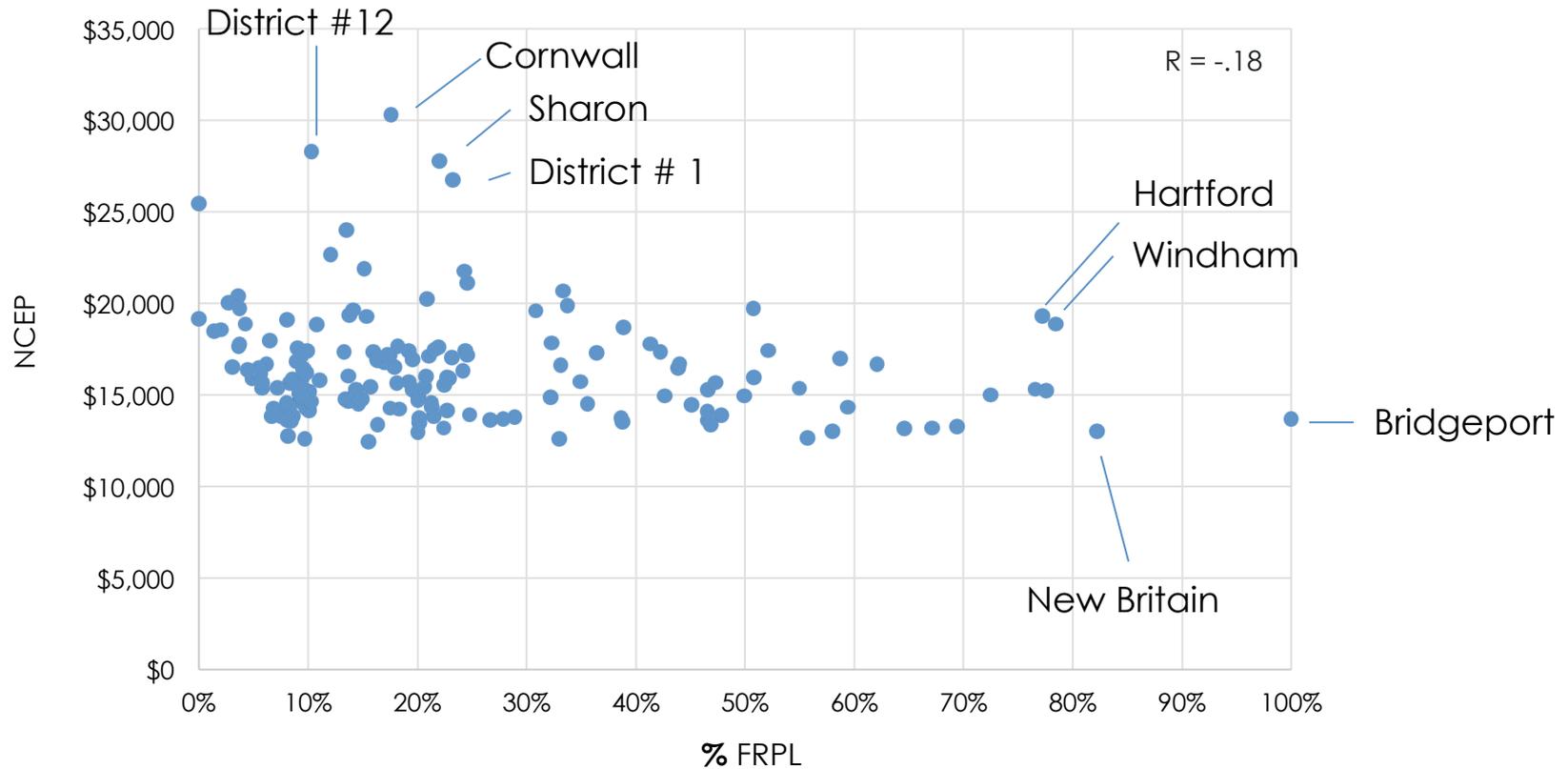
	New Britain	Waterbury	New London	Bridgeport	New Haven	Hartford
% FRPL	82%	72%	78%	100%	59%	77%
% ELL	17%	13%	23%	14%	14%	14%
% SPED	15%	17%	17%	14%	12%	12%

Sources: Connecticut State Department of Education. (2014). *2013-14 End of School Year Report (ED 001) data*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/end-of-year-school-reports-ed001-2009-14>.

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.

There is no correlation between the percentage of low-income students a district serves and per pupil expenditures

NCEP versus % FRPL 2014-15



Sources: Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *2014-15 Net Current Expenditures per Pupil and 2015-16 Excess Cost Grant Basic Contributions*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-public-school-district-spending-per-student-2014-15>. Connecticut State Department of Education. (2015). *CT Public School Enrollment_2000.mdb*. Available from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/data/connecticut-school-enrollment>.