Dear Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for all of the time I know everyone is spending trying to figure out what is a very complicated issue.

There are many ideas on what to include as indicators when factoring a comprehensive and inclusive education formula. My testimony focuses on 7 indicators for your consideration.

1) **Cost Study and Mandate Factor**: I am in support of the cost study part of this bill so that we can begin with a real, independent analysis of what is expected by the State of our students and schools first and what the cost is to meet them. A part of that cost study should consider a mandate factor. They come mainly un-funded. Not all unfunded mandates are bad. They serve students. However, the do come at a cost and when so many are imposed upon all districts they need to either be funded or include a state mandate factor in the formula, which cannot be done unless we have a study of exactly what each mandate costs. We need to know what it actually costs to educate to the states expectations including mandates that are not federally required.

2) **ELL**- Is not currently a factor in the formula. Not all students who require ELL services will be captured under the poverty Indicator, as suggested. Second, we know the services and supports needed to serve students living with poverty and language needs are different and should qualify for funding under both indicators as such.

3) **Special Education**. I believe there should be multiple special education factors. We all know that the cost to educate a special education student who is need of in school supports or services is quite different than one who requires a full-time aid and off campus services and one who requires out of district placement. The state already breaks down special education into different categories so perhaps that can serve as a base for multiple SPED factors. State average in this regard is a poor base. We need to use the true cost.

4) **Property EGNL and Income**. Right now, we have a 90% to 10% proposal. That should be changed to be more balanced. There are many locations that have much need but because of geography have high property wealth but not high income wealth. The 90 to 10 split hurts those communities unfairly in such instances, including communities that do have high need. I would suggest 50-50. The concept that zip code should not determine a student’s access or opportunity works both ways. Mill rate is just not an accurate reflection as a towns ability to pay. It may be that a town is small and therefore does not benefit from efficiencies of scale or a municipality has been very responsible in their planning and under this proposal would be punished for that, or they simply have not raised taxes in quite a time because they cannot, even if they wanted to.

5) **Minimum Base Level of Aid** to all. The promise by the state is to ALL students. The expectations from the state is upon ALL students. To suggest that many students throughout this state are worthy of $0 is unreasonable at best and an abandonment at worst. There should be a base aid for all students- based upon the cost study or how you decide to work the base (which we know has been proposed to be lowered) for ALL students and then adjusted on the other factors. But
in the end ALL students are worthy of state dollars when they are all required to attend school and all schools are held accountable for every student meeting those expectations.

6) Free/Reduced Lunch vs. HUSKY A. This factor is problematic. We know from previous testimony that neither is going to accurately capture all of those students living in poverty- a growing population in this country and present in most likely every one of our districts, including those who are homeless or in foster care. There are many – for whatever reason (be it they don’t want to apply for some reason, they get insurance from another source such as the military, or a parent who is not present in the home) who will not be captured by HUSKY A. They will simply not count under the current proposal. Also, families apply for HUSKY A at all times of the year and go off of it as well, based upon individual circumstances. How would we adjust the formula in such varying circumstances? If the HUSKY A component is based upon a count on 1 date on the calendar clearly this would be problematic. Free and Reduced lunch, I understand, is also not perfect. Perhaps each community can choose which factor works best for their community in this regard. Each student in poverty can be counted under either HUSKY A or Free/Reduced lunch but not both as reported by each district to the state.

7) Error in One Size Fits All: There is no doubt that the universe in education today of one size fits all is not serving our communities, is not serving our students, is not serving our country. The formula that attempts to squeeze all of our unique communities, all of our schools and all of our students into one formula, I would suggest may not be the most fruitful manner in which to fund education. This truth is most likely why the current formula, in part, is not working. Perhaps we must take a community specific approach and include looking at PILOT alongside this issue. Again, something that can be looked at within the cost study.

Education funding is very complicated and many have ideas on how to fix it or what should or should not be the factors. It is important to fix the situation, but it is more important to get it right lest we end up tinkering with it again because it was rushed or didn’t take the time to get to the heart of the matter – the true cost that meets the needs and expectations for all of our students.

We recognize the difficulty in the task before you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Jacobsen