

March 16, 2017

Chairmen Slossberg, Boucher, Fleischmann and Ranking Member Lavielle, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am a resident of Darien, a member of its RTM, and a parent of a child who has received special education.

I would like to make some comments on bills 1007 and 7255, and also offer a special education funding idea for your consideration.

Assuming bill 7255 seeks to study the cooperative model proposed by the CT School Finance project, I hope the task force will use their time and effort on this to devise an alternate solution. As proposed, the co-op model appears (to me) to have so many holes in it as to not even justify a study. Unless there is to be an infusion of cash by the state that is not being discussed in the documents, the numbers just don't work. The idea that every town will receive some kind of discount to their actual spending by participating in the co-op *requires* that there be another source of capital to the system—yet the money already being spent by the state is actually being reallocated to other purposes, and an additional capital investment is actually required to get it started.

Bill 1007, specifically sections 1 and 2, require districts to report on special education spending at a level of granularity that will be difficult and expensive to provide—at the very least. To generate this kind of data will require an incredible amount of work—arguably one or more FTEs in each town—which many districts will struggle to justify and/or provide.

1007 does seem to seek however, a set of data that could be used to determine the feasibility of reducing the threshold for Excess Cost Reimbursement—a worthy cause. I think we can all agree that giving schools more money for special education in Connecticut would be fantastic. The reality is, however—we don't have that money to give.

My suggestion lies in a swap between two elements of the Governor's current budget proposal. What if towns were to take **100%** (not 33%) control and ownership of their teachers' pension contracts? And in exchange, the state put their *annual savings* (67%, or roughly \$800mm next year) into special education?

This would more than double the size of the state's special education spending, towns would be no worse off for having the extra liability (since they would be getting extra funds for education), teachers and towns could work together to more sustainably manage their future liabilities, and the state could rid itself of one of the biggest deficit drivers it has on its' books.

I believe this arrangement this could set our state and teachers' pension system on a path to fiscal health, as well as provide some much needed funding to special education. I want to also reiterate that it is a budget neutral proposition. Thank you for the opportunity to share this idea with you.

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FY 2018 (\$ in millions)					
	STATE			TOWNS	
	Budget	My Plan		Budget	My Plan
SPED	(\$600)	(\$1,400)		\$600	\$1,400
TRS	(\$800)	\$0		(\$400)	(\$1,200)
Net	(\$1,400)	(\$1,400)		\$200	\$200