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Testimony

SB 542: An Act Establishing the Connecticut Special Education Predictable Cost Cooperative

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

February 21, 2017

Good afternoon, Senator Larson, Senator Kelly, Representative Scanlon, Representative Sampson, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 542.

This bill would create a mechanism to fund special education services and programs.

SB 542 is at present a concept bill and contains no specifics. I believe that it is correct to assume that it refers to a proposal developed by the CT School Finance Project, or something similar to it.

In the special education area, there are two major issues: first and foremost, providing appropriate services to students with special needs, and then, necessarily ensuring that these services can be properly funded.

I have appreciated the efforts of the CT School Finance Project to develop this proposal, and to discuss it with legislators. At this time, I feel that it still raises many questions. I wanted to share a few of my most pressing questions with you today.

- How does the decision to fund a district's needs take into account the level of services each district decides to provide?
- Will districts need to prove to the co-op that decisions to provide certain services are justified?
- At what juncture do towns receive their annual funding from the co-op? What happens if a student with extraordinary needs enters a school district midway through an academic year?
- Are school districts expected to make a contribution to the co-op at the outset of every fiscal or academic year? An initial outlay like this might be destabilizing to municipalities under the current budgetary circumstances in the state.
- How will districts be sure that their contributions to the co-op will be used for special education expenses?
- What would be the state's role in the co-op? Who would actually manage it? How would its administration be funded? How would it be overseen?
- If certain districts were to decide not to participate in the co-op, would the predictability features of the co-op be diminished?

Again, it is difficult to know at this stage how this Committee might structure such a bill, as the text is still very rudimentary. I would presume that were this bill to be favorably reported out of this Committee, it would be drafted in full, and subsequently referred to us in the Education Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a number of questions raised by this proposal.