TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

HB7148, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

The Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) is a non-profit professional association that represents school business officials throughout the State of Connecticut. School business officials work closely with school boards, school superintendents, administrators, staff, public officials and communities; and we are responsible for most aspects of school business and operations. This includes, but is not limited to, developing, administering, and monitoring school district budgets.

We offer the following comments regarding HB7148:

The Governor’s budget proposes that towns/ boards of education make partial contributions to the Teacher’s Retirement System. This concept revisits a policy first proposed by the previous administration back in 2017. Although the amounts proposed to be contributed by local governments are at a much lower level than the previous proposal, it still increases the cost to towns by approximately $24 million for FY19-20 and $49 million for FY20-21. Going forward, it is expected that these costs will increase further. This shift of burden of the State’s fiscal woes to local municipalities and school districts is yet another unfunded mandate that will result in significant consequences. Such consequences will include some or all of the following: reduction in school budgets and school services (e.g. reduce or eliminate support services and extra-curricular activities; increase in class size; postpone building and ground maintenance; increase in property taxes and reduce Town fund balances.

The capping of certain statutory grants is a real problem. The excess cost grant, which helps support our neediest students, has been significantly underfunded for many years while the costs of Special Education services has grown significantly. This combination of factors significantly compromises the ability of districts to provide adequate educational needs for all children.

Finally, this bill proposes to accelerate the reduction of ECS for towns scheduled to experience losses under the current funding formula. Many towns are still grappling with the impact of the current ECS phase in. To accelerate this reduction is changing the rules in the middle of the game where resources are already stretched to the limit. We request that you keep the current schedule in place so towns can plan accordingly.

The education of our youth is a top priority for all of us. School officials work collaboratively to maximize results that benefit both our students and our taxpayers. Proper funding at all levels is important to provide opportunities for successful outcomes. We ask the State to continue to fund its share. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the Appropriations Committee on these important matters.