



To: Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Education Committee

From: Dr. Christine Carver, Superintendent of Schools

Date: February 21, 2019

RE: WRITTEN TESTIMONY - Education Committee - March 1, 2019

Please accept this written testimony in regards to the following bills:

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION

SECTION 1: We oppose the following language: For districts providing health services to children attending private schools, requires the private school, rather than the state, to reimburse the district for such costs. *This would cause significant hardship for our parochial school in Bethel. It would likely cause an increase in tuition to make up the cost, thereby reducing or eliminating options for a faith based education.*

SECTION 6: We oppose the following language: Town by Town Schedule for reimbursement to the state for the a portion of the normal cost of the teacher pensions for FY20 and FY21. Formula for reimbursements thereafter: Non-distressed municipalities: a minimum of 25% of its allocable portion of the normal cost and an additional percentage equal to the percentage above the statewide median pensionable salary per FTE. Late payment penalties of 5% of the amount due. Withholding of state aid in the amount of any default and penalties. *We believe that this is passing onto municipalities an increased tax burden at the local level. We are concerned that there will be attempts to increase the percentage of contribution over time. Coupled with reductions in ECS, despite increasing enrollment in our public schools, will impact district programs.*

We oppose all of the following sections as it creates caps and reduces the state share in funding public education. *Again, we are concerned that if the state permanently caps the grants, the state will not be meeting their obligation to support the education of children in Connecticut and causing increased burden on local municipalities.*

- SECTION 7: Makes the spending cap on Adult Education Grants permanent.
- SECTION 8: Makes the spending cap on Bilingual Education Grants permanent.
- SECTION 9: Makes the spending cap on Special Education Reimbursements for certain students in out-of-home and school settings permanent.
- SECTION 10: Makes the spending cap on Special Education and Excess Cost reimbursements permanent.
- SECTION 11: Makes the spending cap permanent for reimbursements for costs in excess of the local or regional board of education's basic contribution for a child placed out by the Commissioner of Children and Families or by other agencies.

We oppose SECTION 21: Changes the definition for: "Number of children eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk" means the number of pupils of the town enrolled in public schools at the expense of the town on October first or the full school day immediately preceding such date, **[in families that meet the income eligibility guidelines established by the federal Department of Agriculture] who are directly certified** for free or reduced price meals or free milk **through the direct certification process authorized** under the **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, P.L. 111-296, and the** National School Lunch Program, established pursuant to P.L. 79-396. We are highly concerned that this will affect our ECS allocations. *Many of our families meet the criteria for free and reduced lunch through the application process and are not directly certified because they do not receive any type of state aide. These children have the same needs as those that are directly certified as eligible and we would not want this to create a loss of resources to the district.*

REGIONALISM

In general, we are concerned that all of the proposed bills have a sole focus on fiscal efficiency, without regard for the impact on student outcomes. We feel any look at regionalism should focus first on answering the following question: How will any change to our current structure of public education in Connecticut positively affect the outcomes for all students in the state? And second, will it create fiscal efficiency? We do not oppose the ability to regionalize services and have done so in our region.

S.B. No. 874, "An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services in Connecticut," sets forth an unrealistic timeline for redistricting and consolidation of school services. *We are concerned the timeline is unrealistic. We are concerned with the makeup of the committee structure with much of the committee structure reflecting a political outcome, without regard for the needs of the students in the state. We would recommend that the state employ an independent, unbiased researcher or research team who can study the issue, engage stakeholder groups and come up with solid recommendations.*

We are opposed to S.B. No. 738 An Act Concerning the Creation Of Regional School Districts creating school districts aligned with probate courts. *What evidence do we have that school districts that size increase fiscal efficiency? In addition, there are [studies](#) which show a negative relationship between the overall size of a district and student achievement. Parents have expressed concern on impact to programs and services that are unique to the community. Taxpayers have also expressed concern about increases in local property taxes and lack of control of the budget in a regional system.*

Cc. Bethel Board of Education