



**RESPONSE TO: GOVERNOR'S BILL NO. 874, "AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT."**

**PROVIDED BY: SHANNON MARIMÓN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CONNECTICUT COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION REFORM (CCER)**

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Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and honorable members of the Education Committee: my name is Shannon Marimón, I'm the new Executive Director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER) and a resident of West Hartford. My testimony today is in support of **Governor's Bill No. 874: "AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT."**

Public education has long been a point of pride for our state. However, while Connecticut has boasted some progress in narrowing achievement gaps between 2011 and today, what we often see as improved achievement at the 4th-grade level does not sustain at the 8th grade level. In fact, the achievement gap based on race and income has actually worsened in some cases. For instance, while the achievement gap between black and white students in Grade 4 math decreased 7 points, the Grade 8 math gap actually increased by 2 points<sup>1</sup>.

In Connecticut, zip codes still determine outcomes.

There are a number of reasons for this, one of which that Connecticut has exacerbated its racial gaps when it comes to school funding. EdBuild recently released a report that indicates a \$23 billion overall racial gap when it comes to local and state funding<sup>2</sup> -- an average of over \$2,000 per pupil more spent on funding in white districts than non-white districts, despite serving roughly the same number of children<sup>3</sup>. The report states that "the funding gap is largely the result of the reliance on property taxes as a primary source of funding for schools. Communities in overwhelmingly white areas tend to be wealthier, and school districts' ability to raise money depends on the value of local property and the ability of residents to pay higher taxes."

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<sup>1</sup>[https://ctmirror.org/2019/01/07/malloy-confronts-school-inequities-civil-rights-issue-time/?utm\\_source=Connecticut+Mirror+Mailing+List&utm\\_campaign=5e40c675a5-DAILY\\_BRIEFING\\_AFTERNOON&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_571d22f8e4-5e40c675a5-68213713](https://ctmirror.org/2019/01/07/malloy-confronts-school-inequities-civil-rights-issue-time/?utm_source=Connecticut+Mirror+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=5e40c675a5-DAILY_BRIEFING_AFTERNOON&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_571d22f8e4-5e40c675a5-68213713)

<sup>2</sup>Analysis is not inclusive of federal dollars.

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/report-finds-23-billion-racial-funding-gap-for-schools/2019/02/25/d562b704-3915-11e9-a06c-3ec8ed509d15\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.cdb39e53df91](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/report-finds-23-billion-racial-funding-gap-for-schools/2019/02/25/d562b704-3915-11e9-a06c-3ec8ed509d15_story.html?utm_term=.cdb39e53df91)

Predominantly white school districts in Connecticut have on average \$2,931 more per student in funding than predominantly non-white school districts<sup>4</sup>.

As a state all-consumed with budget woes, we have become complacent when it comes to adequately educating our most vulnerable students. Federal funds and state initiatives such as the Alliance Districts and Commissioner's Network try to correct the adverse impact of the state's racial funding gap. Unfortunately, these efforts have proven to be insufficient.

This is why CCER is supportive of the Governor's proposal to establish a Commission on Shared School Services for the purpose of developing a plan for the redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts. We know that narrowing the racial funding gap is necessary to eliminating achievement gaps, and we believe the Commission will illuminate the areas where duplication occurs and savings can potentially be rerouted -- the right nod to equity -- to support our state's most vulnerable students.

It's important to note that CCER is not supportive of any school district being penalized for not redistricting or consolidating. However, in these times of fiscal austerity, we must be bold and innovative in repurposing essential resources so that they are used optimally in the service of our children's education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. I would be happy to discuss this legislation further at any time.

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***About the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)***

The Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER) advocates for Pre-K-12 education policies and practices that narrow achievement and opportunity gaps so all Connecticut students can access and succeed within a 21st-century education system. We do this by collaborating with educators, employers, and community members across the state.

We are guided by the belief that schools must prepare all students to become thriving citizens and professionals, and we are committed to recruiting, preparing, and supporting educators to deliver on that promise. We consider how enacting one set of policies/actions makes realizing other policies/actions more possible and meaningful. Our priorities assume examples of positive growth and outcomes exist in some schools and districts, and that the state's role is to understand how certain schools and districts working with historically underserved students are closing achievement gaps while others are not. We are attempting to study, learn from, optimize, and most importantly—scale—what's already been proven to have impact. Our recommendations focus on optimizing present resources rather than seeking new funding sources.

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<sup>4</sup><https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion#CT>