



CITY OF NORWALK
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Testimony in opposition to
H.B. No. 7319 AN ACT CONCERNING FISCAL INDEPENDENCE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS
Planning and Development Committee Public Hearing, March 15, 2019

Senator McCarthy Vahey, Representative Cassano, Senator Champagne, Representative Zawistowski, and Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

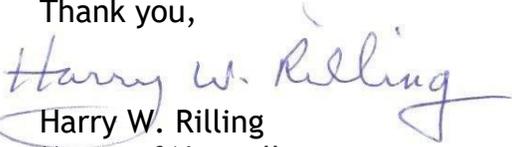
My name is Harry Rilling and I am the Mayor of Norwalk, Connecticut. I have submitted this testimony to voice my opposition to H.B. No. 7319: An Act Concerning Fiscal Independence of School Districts.

I understand the desire for greater accountability in Government and Education spending, but this bill is not the answer. It's my belief this bill does the opposite by making school districts independent taxing authorities. This proposal would negatively impact local and regional districts with less than 15,000 students by taking on additional responsibilities that are currently handled by the municipality. Duplicating these efforts is a waste of time and resources, and could limit the public's voice in the process.

This proposal is full of unanswered questions, but the one that must be answered first is "how will this affect our students?" Any proposal that fundamentally changes how we handle Education funding needs to be centered on its impact on our students. In Norwalk, more than 54 percent of our budget goes directly to Education - money well spent. Thanks to the tireless efforts of our Board of Education, teachers, staff, volunteers, as well as the hard work put in by students and their parents and guardians, Norwalk is one of the top performing urban school districts in the state. Their focus should remain on education and improving the lives of young people - not on how to collect taxes and assess property values.

I hope this Committee will reject this proposal.

Thank you,


Harry W. Rilling
Mayor of Norwalk