



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 3, 2021

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members representing 168 towns and cities.

SB 976 An Act Concerning Special Education

CCM supports SB 976 as it would address topics associated with special education by (a) requiring the technical education system to accept and enroll students with individualized education programs, and (b) to establish a task force to study issues relating to the provision and funding of special education.

Special education costs statewide exceed \$1.8 million – and continue to rise. Towns and cities pay for about 60% of those costs. Unforeseen demands for special education services too often result in local budget adjustments, supplementary appropriations, and other extraordinary measures. This is particularly troublesome in smaller towns, where the addition of even one special-needs student can decimate a budget.

CCM supports efforts that will advance adjusting special education funding in Connecticut, including a task force to study the issue. CCM appreciates the inclusion of a CCM representative to the task force that would be created by SB 976. In particular, CCM would encourage that the task force examine: (1) potential regional opportunities for the provision of special education services, and (2) potential opportunities to increase the involvement of Regional Education Service Centers for the provision of special education services.

While CCM is hopeful that this task force will produce fruitful recommendations, unfortunately, for far too long this topic has consistently been reviewed and studied without meaningful legislative action. Therefore, CCM has long advocated for modifications that can be implemented now in order to provide municipalities stability and predictability in budgeting for special education. These recommendations include:

- Requiring that special education funding follows the student until such fiscal year concludes when such student changes school districts during the fiscal year,
- Allowing a town to reduce their MBR in an amount that reflects costs associated with special education students once those students leave the district, and

- Decrease the Excess Cost grant threshold to at most 2.5 times the district's average per-pupil expenditure and fully fund the grant.

We encourage the Committee to review these specific proposals and consider them for legislative action during the 2021 legislative session.

CCM urges the Committee to favorably report SB 976.

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, State and Federal Relations Manager of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or 203-500-7556.