



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Education Committee
March 17, 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **HB-6621 - AN ACT CONCERNING ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) has had the opportunity to discuss a minor revision with several lawmakers on the committee which would help address towns participating in regional school districts budget more effectively.

Calculating Average Daily Membership

COST respectfully requests that that a provision **be added to HB-6621** to improve the method for calculating the amount each town in a regional school district must pay each year. Pursuant to Section 10-261(a)(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, Average Daily Membership is calculated in October for the following school year.

However, due to year to year fluctuations in student enrollment, a town's annual assessment can swing up or down, making it difficult for participating towns to budget effectively. This is an increasing problem due to diminishing enrollment, which can cause a lot of volatility in the town's yearly assessment.

Allowing the use of a five-year rolling average in determining the Average Daily Membership (ADM) in schools would provide greater predictability in the town's annual assessment, giving towns the ability to budget effectively in the near term. Residents are often concerned when a town's assessment spikes due to changes in enrollment and have voted down budgets for this reason. It also creates unnecessary tension for towns participating in regional school districts because this makes it seem like some towns in the regional school district are getting a better deal than other towns.

By smoothing out the likelihood of large swings in a town's annual assessment, allowing a five year rolling average in ADM will help ensure that towns and school districts can focus on delivering quality education rather than being pressured to cut spending merely because of substantial changes in a town's assessment.

COST would be happy to discuss this issue further with lawmakers and the state Department of Education.