



Testimony Before the Education Cost Sharing Task Force

October 25, 2011

Secretary Barnes, Senator Stillman, members of the task force, on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening. The League has a long history of supporting both increased state aid to public education and a more equitable method of distributing such aid. To that end, the League believes the following broad principles should govern the state's role in funding education.

The system of public elementary and secondary education in Connecticut should provide a suitable program of educational experiences for each child and should make available to each community sufficient financial resources to support that level of educational services. To that end...

- The state should assure through grants to communities that sufficient resources are available for the education of every child, regardless of where that child lives. The state should fund 50% of the overall statewide cost of K-12 public education, with every school district receiving some minimum per-pupil state aid.
- Because of the wide differences in local wealth, greater equality of educational opportunity requires a considerably higher state percentage of school costs in poorer communities and a lower percentage in wealthier ones.
- In determining the total amount of state assistance to a community, many factors should be considered. Among them--the number of poorer families, standardized test results, graduation or drop-out rates, the number of students not proficient in English, and excess costs for special education.
- The acute problem, particularly in cities, created by concentrations of children who for various reasons are more costly to educate, requires that the state adopt extraordinary measures directed at raising the levels of achievement in these communities.
- In order to assure that any increase in state assistance for schools achieves an improvement in education, the state should require a minimum expenditure per pupil for a community to be eligible for any state assistance for its schools.
- Local communities should retain control of instructional programs and spending allocations. There should be no cap on what a community may spend per pupil.
- State aid to any city or town should be free to rise or fall each year by as much as the Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) formula requires. Artificial caps on the ECS grant, as well as stop-loss provisions, should be avoided.
- The Foundation, the basic element of the ECS formula, should be adjusted in each biennial budget.

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