

TESTIMONY provided to ECS Commission
Waterford, CT.
Tuesday, October 25, 2011
Presented by David J. Calchera, Director, Public Policy, CAPSS

Good evening Co-Chairman Barnes and Stillman and members of the ECS task force.

First, let me thank you for agreeing to undertake work on what is probably the most complex issue in municipal financing – a methodology to ensure that each child in Connecticut has the resources to learn at a high level. While the original design of the formula went a long way in that direction, it has never been fully funded and has been modified in ways that result in inequities.

The first thing we would ask is that the Commission focus it's efforts on producing an interim report that is truly interim; one that identifies issues with the formula, the goals and parameters of any new formula development and take the time necessary to issue a final, actionable report.

In developing that framework, we suggest the following items be addressed:

1. **Revenue development.** It is settled that education is a constitutional responsibility of the state . The state must play a greater role in developing and distributing revenue than is currently does. Leaving the bulk of education funding to local taxes is simply not working.
2. **Begin schooling earlier.** We must move aggressively to ensure that each child begins schooling, not necessarily provided by public schools, at age three and that each child is provided a full-day kindergarten experience
3. **Adequacy.** The issue of what it takes to provide at least an adequate education needs to be addressed.
4. **Equity.** The issue of providing funding across the state to school units in an equitable way must be addressed.
5. **Schools of Choice.** We believe parents and children ought to have maximum choice to choose schools that meet their learning needs and interests. We also believe those schools should be integral parts of larger systems; should they remain essentially competitive systems, the funding they receive from local systems should not exceed the savings realized by that system.

On November 9th CAPSS will be releasing a set of recommendations on school transformation. Our members have spent two years addressing the problem that our present system is not designed to achieve the results society demands; that is, that ALL children learn at high levels. That report will have much to say about the organization and schedule of schooling, as well as governance, leadership and resources. If all we do is rearrange the existing factors in the funding formula, we have not really deal with the fundamental issue of a system not designed for the future. We would appreciate an opportunity at a later date to present our work to

you. We should take a closer look at the system we want to fund before settling on a formula to fund it.