



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242 - (860) 571-7446 - Fax (860) 571-7452 - Email admin@cabe.org

**Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Cost Sharing Task Force**

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Good Afternoon, I am Don Blevins, Chairman of the Waterford Board of Education and President of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. We appreciate the opportunity to address the critical issue of education finance.

In order to evaluate the current funding formula and plan for the future of education finance in Connecticut, it is important to review some of the history. The two major funding formulas that have been implemented by Connecticut since the original decision in Horton v. Meskill, the Guaranteed Tax Base (GTB) program and the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) program, have never been fully funded – and therefore it is impossible to determine whether they have “worked” to achieve the intended goals. For example, the ECS formula was designed so that the foundation level was to be adjusted to reflect increased costs each year. As implemented, the foundation remained frozen for many years, thus failing to accurately reflect actual costs. In addition, the significant burden of funding special education services was exacerbated when the majority of special education funding was incorporated into the ECS grant 15 years ago.

We urge you to consider the following principles as you address state support for public education:

- Education is a constitutional right in Connecticut, every child is entitled to some state support for their public school education.
- A more equitable state/local sharing of education costs is essential to providing appropriate educational programs.
- The funding formula must accurately reflect the cost of providing educational programs to meet the state and federal performance standards.
- The formula should use the most recent available data to appropriately weight for student need (poverty, ELL)
- The threshold for the special education excess cost grant should be lowered – and the cap removed – so that the state would assume a more appropriate share of extraordinarily high special education placements.
- Charter school funding should not compromise local district financing.
- A comprehensive magnet school funding formula should be applicable statewide for both host and inter district schools, sending and receiving districts.
- In order to be an education funding formula, a requirement must be in place to insure an appropriate local expenditure on educational programs in order to provide substantially equal advantages.
- Elimination of mandates that lack a strong justification to allow education funding dollars to be focused on student achievement.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to provide the appropriate education resources for Connecticut’s children.