



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
Submitted to the
Appropriations Committee**

March 9, 2021

HB 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Representative France, Senator Miner and members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Liz Brown a member of the Waterbury Board of Education and First Vice President of CABE.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, strongly supports the Education Cost Sharing Funding Formula agreement of 2017 to phase in increases to towns. The economic challenges faced at all of levels of government are felt most intensively at the local level – where we are in the middle of the budget development and adoption season. Many districts have faced several years of 0% budget increases. Given the number of new initiatives and reforms put in place by the federal, state and local governments, this is a time where we need to maintain our commitment to our public schools. CABE does not support the freezing of the 2017 phase in of the new ECS funding formula. While federal ESSER funding will help districts address learning loss, PPE, cleaning of schools, ventilation improvements and professional development, student learning loss will be an issue that will continue through the next few years. CABE strongly urges you to maintain the existing ECS phase-in plan that supports the ongoing educational needs of our students.

Continuation of the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost Grant creates an increased hardship on local districts as these costs rise. We urge you to remove the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost Grant to restore the safety net available to districts for these extraordinary educational costs.

CABE supports the Pilot Open Choice Program in Danbury and Norwalk. CABE has longstanding positions addressing educational equity and racial isolation.

CABE urges you to provide support for several of the initiatives identified as priorities by the Education Committee Leadership, including social and emotional learning and minority teacher recruitment and retention.

The lack of minority representation in our public schools is an issue of concern to all districts in Connecticut. We want our students to have the opportunity to learn from educators from a variety of backgrounds, races and culture. While progress has been made in increasing the number of educators of color, much work remains to be done. Currently students of color account for over 40% of Connecticut's student population, while only 9.6% of the state public school teachers and administrators are people of color. While legislation passed in the 2019 session, funding needs to be appropriated.

Resources to support professional development in social and emotional learning for school staff, as well as access to mental health professionals for students, is an important investment to improve school safety and climate. These needs are even greater as a result of the trauma and isolation created by COVID-19.

We appreciate your attention to these issues.