

Dear Member(s) of the Appropriations Committee,

The freeze proposed by Governor Lamont on Education Cost Sharing is a regressive measure that will perpetuate the inequities that plagued the program in 2017. It will emasculate the corrective effort made by the state legislature in that year and continue to penalize local taxpayers in over 70 municipalities.

Not just the amount the state contributes to ECS will be frozen, but also the number of towns receiving far more or far less than they deserve will remain static. For example, Guilford will continue to receive **five times** what it deserves according to the ECS formula, and Greenwich will receive less than half its due. Waterbury will continue receiving 79% funding and Danbury 68%. Meanwhile, Farmington will get 175% funding and Groton 100%.

A vivid example of the persistent systemic inequity involves Region 14 shared by Woodbury and Bethlehem. Woodbury sends and pays for about three quarters of the students, Bethlehem about one quarter. Yet while Woodbury receives \$1.5 million or **69%** of its \$2.2 million funding, Bethlehem gets \$1.06 million, **139%** of its \$784,000 entitlement. The legislature's schedule would have equalized that unfair difference by 2028, but the freeze will prolong it at the expense of Woodbury taxpayers who in effect will be subsidizing their Bethlehem neighbors.

Surely, if lowering the state's financial commitment to ECS is the questionable goal, there ought to be those in Hartford who can figure out how to save money AND continue to achieve full equity using the ECS formula to distribute whatever the state contributes. Otherwise Education Cost Sharing will be in the same sorry, shameful situation it was four years ago only with less money to distribute.

That this freeze is touted to extend only two years to save \$84 million does not justify extending the inequitable distribution of ECS funds, no matter how big or small the ECS "pie" is. And, based on the state's record of ECS "reform" from 2012 – 2017, it is hard to believe there will be any thaw after the next budget cycle.

The state legislature should reject this freeze when it crafts its version of the budget. It should keep the promise it made to municipalities in 2017.

Stay safe,

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(The attached chart shows the inequities of ECS disbursement in 2018, the improvement in 2019 – 2021, and the effects of the freeze on ECS funding in the next six years.)