

**Testimony of
Richard A. Moccia, Mayor, City of Norwalk**

**SB 24: AN Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness
February 22, 2012**

Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony regarding reforming or replacing the current education funding model.

I am writing to explain Norwalk's frustration with the current Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula. The existing formula unfairly penalizes the City of Norwalk and severely impacts the ability of Norwalk to provide services and penalizes our local taxpayers. As I have tried to analyze the formula over the years it is has become abundantly clear that for whatever reason, be it lack of information, partisan politics or other reasons, that we have been severely shortchanged.

As we saw recently with Norwalk, when districts and school systems are treated differently from one another for arbitrary reasons, it is the students who lose out. Students' funding for their education should not be subject to political or other circumstances as they arise. We need one fair, streamlined funding formula for all public school students that is transparent and uses accurate, reasonable data to inform the distribution of state money.

Based on Norwalk's poverty rate, median household income, and ESL demands, it seems that Norwalk is a much needier community than other communities that receive far more funding than Norwalk. It seems that the socio economic and demographic factors that Norwalk faces are similar to other cities in the State, yet there is an overreliance on the Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita, which is a flawed and an imperfect measure of wealth, which does a poor job of capturing the actual ability of taxpayers to support education expenditures.

I believe a comparison of several other cities and the amount of aid received will dramatically point out the disparity that I have mentioned previously:

ECS Aid per Student

Norwalk	\$930
Ansonia	\$5,516
Danbury	\$2,246
Derby	\$4,738

East Hartford	\$5,760
Meriden	\$6,433
Norwich	\$8,348
West Haven	\$6,641

ECS Aid Comparison with Selected Wealthier Communities

ECS Aid per Student		Median Household Income
Norwalk	\$ 930	\$71,877
Cheshire	\$1,880	\$101,392
Milford	\$1505	\$74,940
Southington	\$2,919	\$73,453
West Hartford	\$1579	\$76,835

In summary, the current ECS formula is weighed too heavily on Equalized Net Grand List Per Capita. The formula should give consideration to the socio-economic factors that have an impact on the educational needs of the students are educated in each school district. There are numerous factors that should be considered, such as percent of children living below poverty levels, ESL demand, special education needs, free and reduced lunch numbers and the number of public housing units within the city, etc. Therefore, while this bill is admirable for its efforts to increase funding for students in need in a variety of ways, it does not address the fundamental issues with the ECS formula. Any real solution to the challenges that Norwalk and other school districts face must reckon with those inadequacies and fix ECS' intrinsic flaws.

Norwalk is the Sixth largest city in the state and our residents send many tax dollars to Hartford. It is time that we receive a fair return on those tax dollars. Thank you for your consideration and for allowing me to present my views.

Very Truly Yours,

Richard A. Moccia

Mayor, City of Norwalk

