



Testimony Regarding the Connecticut Department of Education’s Budget in H.B. 5048 - An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025

*Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent
February 14, 2024*

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committees including Senators Anwar and Gordon representing the Town of Ellington:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the Connecticut (CT) State Department of Education’s budget by way of **H.B. 5048 - An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025**. My name is Dr. Scott Nicol and I have the honor and privilege of serving as superintendent for the Ellington Public Schools.

The Governor’s proposed budget relative to the Connecticut State Department of Education has many highlights with some significant challenges as outlined by the School & State Finance Project.

- Reduces overall funding for K-12 education by \$62.9 million
- Eliminates the \$150 million Education Finance Reform line item
- Eliminates \$54.3 million for magnet schools from the Education Finance Reform line item while providing a 3% per-student grant increase to magnet schools
- Eliminates tens of millions of dollars in savings to local school districts by removing the cap on general education tuition charged by magnet school operators and AgriScience programs
- Eliminates \$11.4 million for the Open Choice Program from the Education Finance Reform line item and instead provides a 3% per-student grant increase to participants in the Open Choice Program
- Eliminates \$7.2 million for AgriScience programs from the Education Finance Reform line item and instead provides \$1.2 million to fully fund the current statutory grant

Yet, the focus of this testimony will be the **Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula phase-in schedule**. Although the Governor’s budget added \$6 million more to a grant of \$2 billion, the adjustments made that are the result of accounting for changes in enrollment, student needs, and community wealth over a two-year period (FY 22-23 to FY 24-25) have significant problematic decreases in the funding for many municipalities/school districts.

Here are some of the municipalities/school districts that are seeing a significant reduction in ECS over a very short amount of time.

MUNICIPALITY/SCHOOL DISTRICT	ECS REDUCTION
Manchester	\$1,294,856
Naugatuck	\$973,202
New London	\$822,378

Middletown	\$735,166
Glastonbury	\$624,821
Wethersfield	\$594,407
Branford	\$591,575
Newington	\$563,354
Watertown	\$557,549
Ellington	\$548,141

The Town of Ellington/Ellington Public Schools has been underfunded relative to the annual ECS grant for approximately twenty years. H.B. 5003 accelerated a long overdue increase for Ellington. However, those monies were never realized because the application of the ECS formula has reduced the \$548,141 anticipated amount.

In short, Ellington’s variables relative to the ECS formula changed at the wrong time and therefore, Ellington lost out twice. This has occurred for other municipalities/school districts throughout the state.

Please understand that I support adjustments to the ECS formula. However, significant changes to ECS grant amounts in such a short period are problematic for municipalities/school districts to reasonably forecast budgets.

Recommendation

- 1) For districts losing ECS funding in H.B. 5048, we ask you to consider phase-out criteria such as **receiving no less than 75% of the amount as determined in PA 23-204**. Additional phase-out adjustments can be made in the next biennial budget much like we do with other grants. These districts have already submitted their budget for 2024-2025 and cannot afford adjustments of these magnitudes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Nicol (snicol@ellingtonschoools.net), should I be of further support for the specifics of the education budget relative to H.B. 5048.