



CONNECTICUT

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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Education Reform Now Connecticut

March 3, 2021

**Re: Support for S.B. 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut**

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Vice Chairs Abrams and Barry, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and Members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide **testimony in support of S.B. 948**.

Every child in Connecticut should be able to receive an adequate and equitable allocation of resources to meet his or her unique needs. Unfortunately, for too many Connecticut students, the town in which they live dictates the quality of education they receive. Education Reform Now CT therefore supports policy efforts designed to give students fair access to high-quality educational experiences and opportunities. In 2017, we were part of the coalition of advocates, legislators, and policy experts that sought to improve the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula through the passage of critical school funding legislation. We are incredibly proud of this landmark effort because it made school funding more fair with new weights for student needs, and significantly more transparent. But there's still more work to be done.

First, the formula needs to address systemic racism and opportunity gaps. Currently, the education funding system is impacted by large disparities in community wealth because it relies heavily on local property taxes from towns that are racially and socioeconomically segregated. By expanding the ECS formula's weights for English Learners and districts with concentrated poverty, we can reduce these institutional barriers to opportunity. The proposed legislation would narrow the racial funding disparity gap by 74%, and provide additional resources for each English Learner and each student from a low-income family attending a district with high-levels of poverty.

Second, we can fund all students based upon their learning needs, instead of excluding over 78,000 students whose educations are currently funded through flat-dollar grants simply because they do not attend local or regional school districts. Charter schools and magnet schools are part of the public education infrastructure in our state, and their students deserve to be funded in accordance with their needs, just like all public school children. The proposed legislation would invest \$67 million more in RESC interdistrict magnet schools and \$37 million more in state charter schools, utilizing the same formula and weights across school types.

Third, we must eliminate or expedite the formula's phase-in schedule so that districts are fully funded with the allocations they need to meet the demands of their student populations. The 2017 school finance legislation included a schedule that would have begun a \$30M phase-in this year. But students need the full allocation now, especially given the hard work ahead of overcoming the havoc that the pandemic has

wreaked upon their education. ***Rather than delay, we should accelerate the delivery of these overdue funds so that all Connecticut students have what they need. That's what this bill would do.***

Please support S.B. 948 so that the state can invest properly in its students. We need a student-centered school funding system that is equitable, applied to all public school students, and meets education needs today.



### **About Education Reform Now CT**

The state chapter of a national organization, Education Reform Now CT is a 501(c)(3) that operates as a think tank and policy advocate, promoting great educational opportunities and achievement for all by increasing equity, protecting civil rights, and strengthening the social safety net.