About the CT School Finance Project

- Founded in 2015, the nonprofit Connecticut School Finance Project aims to ensure Connecticut has a fair and equitable school finance system and be a trusted, nonpartisan, and independent source of accurate data and information.

- Although not a member-based organization, the Connecticut School Finance Project actively works with a diverse group of stakeholders, including education and community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and individuals interested in how school finance impacts their students and schools.

- We aim to develop fair, well-thought-out solutions to Connecticut’s school finance challenges that incorporate the viewpoints and perspectives of stakeholders.
CT School Finance Project’s Goals

• Build knowledge about how the current school funding system works,

• Bring together stakeholders who are impacted by how schools are funded, and

• Identify solutions to Connecticut’s school funding challenges that are fair to students and taxpayers, and strengthen schools and communities.
Overview of FY 18/19 Education Budget Changes
Total ECS Funding

- **FY 2018**
  - *After holdbacks:* $1.93 billion (-$89.3 million from FY 2017 levels)

- **FY 2019**
  - $2.02 billion in FY 2019 (+$88.9 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

- Budget also allows a town to reduce its Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) in FYs 2018 and 2019 if it experiences a decrease in ECS funding. The MBR reduction cannot be higher than the ECS decrease.

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Other Significant Education Grants

• **Commissioner’s Network**
  - FY 2018 after holdbacks: $10 million (-$2.1M from FY 2017 levels)
  - FY 2019: $10 million (+$0 from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

• **Excess Cost grant**
  - FY 2018 after holdbacks: $139 million (+$3.5 million from FY 2017 levels)
  - FY 2019: $142.1 million (+$3.1 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

• **Open Choice program**
  - FY 2018 after holdbacks: $37.1 million (-$3.1 million from FY 2017 levels)
  - FY 2019: $40.1 million in FY 2019 (+$3 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

• **Priority School Districts**
  - FY 2018 after holdbacks: $37.2 million (-$5.2 million from FY 2017 levels)
  - FY 2019: $38.1 million (+$1 million from FY 2018 levels with holdbacks)

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
### Choice Program Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>FY 2017 Funding</th>
<th>FY 2018 Funding with Holdbacks</th>
<th>Difference from FY 2017</th>
<th>FY 2019 Budgeted Funding</th>
<th>Difference from FY 2018 w/ Holdbacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Charter Schools</td>
<td>$110,838,808</td>
<td>$109,821,500</td>
<td>-$1,014,308</td>
<td>$116,964,132</td>
<td>+$7,142,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Charter Schools</td>
<td>$388,015</td>
<td>$432,000</td>
<td>+$43,985</td>
<td>$540,000</td>
<td>+$108,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnet Schools</td>
<td>$313,058,158</td>
<td>$309,509,936</td>
<td>-$3,548,222</td>
<td>$326,508,158</td>
<td>$16,998,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT Technical High School System</td>
<td>$163,367,535</td>
<td>$151,022,633</td>
<td>-$12,344,902</td>
<td>$157,780,114</td>
<td>+$6,757,481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ECS Funding in Fiscal Year 2018
ECS block grants remain in place for FY 2018

- Budget does not implement new ECS formula until FY 2019
- For remainder of FY 2018, budget continues practice of distributing ECS funds via block grants
- FY 2018 ECS grants are based on what districts received in FY 2017
- Non-Alliance Districts receive percentage decreases from FY 2017 grants ranging from 75% to 13%
- Alliance Districts receive percentage decreases from FY 2017 grants ranging from 2.3% to 0.12%
- ECS is reduced by a total of $88.9 million in FY 2018 after holdbacks are taken into account

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
FY 2019: A New ECS Formula
Overview of New ECS Formula

• New formula would begin in FY 2019 and be phased in over 10 years
  • Increase of $88.9 million (over FY 2018 ECS funding with holdbacks) in FY 2019
  • Estimated increase of $42.3 million per year from FY 2020 – FY 2028
  • Estimated total increase, after phase-in, of $380 million in FY 2028 and beyond

• Student-based, weighted funding formula

• Formula only applies to local public schools, all other types of Connecticut public schools (magnet schools, local and state charter schools, CTHSS, vo-ag schools, Open Choice) will continue to be funded by 10 other formulas

Foundation

• Foundation amount is intended to represent the estimated cost of educating a CT general education student who does not have any additional learning needs

• Foundation in new formula = $11,525 per pupil
  • Same as most recent ECS formula

• Foundation continues to “incorporate” State’s share of general special education funding

• Foundation based on past foundation amounts and not derived using verifiable education spending data
  • However, $11,525 is within a range of reasonable foundation amounts when accounting for the inclusion of special education aid.

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Performance Adjusted Foundation

- Below foundation estimates are based on state-level expenditures.
  - Derived by calculating an average of total state per-pupil expenditures on core instructional cost categories for states performing well on the 2013 NAEP.
  - Expenditure data is adjusted to CT cost-of-living and inflation from 2013-2017.
- Calculation of the relative performance of each state includes adjustments for factors such as poverty, English proficiency, race and ethnicity, and special education to ensure apples-to-apples comparisons between state performance levels.

Sources:
Formula Weights

• New formula contains three “need-student” weights, which increase per-pupil state education aid for students with additional learning needs.

• **Low-income student weight (NO CHANGE)**
  • Formula includes a low-income student weight of 0.3
  • Increases foundation amount by 30 percent for students who live in low-income households as measured by eligibility for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL)

• **Concentrated poverty weight (NEW)**
  • Formula increases per-student funding for low-income students who live in districts with high concentrations of low-income students
  • Concentrated poverty weight is 0.05
  • Increases foundation amount an additional five percent (for a total of 35 percent) for low-income students residing in districts with concentrations of low-income students of over 75 percent of district enrollment

• **English Learner weight (NEW)**
  • Formula includes weight of 0.15 for English Learners
  • Increases foundation amount by 15 percent for students needing additional English-language skills

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prior ECS Formula</th>
<th>New ECS Formula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Low-income</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>5% for districts with more than 75% of students identified as low-income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
### Formula Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Need</th>
<th>Weight:</th>
<th>Concentration Threshold:</th>
<th>Concentration Weight:</th>
<th>Identification Method:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Students</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>Eligibility for FRPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner (EL) Weight</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Need</th>
<th>Funding Per Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education (Non-need) Student</td>
<td>$11,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Student</td>
<td>$14,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Low-income Student</td>
<td>$15,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income and English Learner</td>
<td>$16,711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>$13,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Low-income English Learner</td>
<td>$17,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
## How the “Need Student” calculation works

The formula presented is: 

\[ (20,000) + (35\% \text{ of } 16,000) + (15\% \text{ of } 4,000) = 26,200 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Town A</th>
<th>Town B</th>
<th>Town C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrollment</strong></td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Low-income</strong></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligible for Concentrated Poverty Weight</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% English Learners</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need Students</strong></td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECS Student Count</strong></td>
<td>26,200</td>
<td>20,600</td>
<td>22,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Base Aid Ratio

• Formula includes equity metric to distribute state education aid, where the towns with the least ability to fund their public schools receive the most state aid.

• Town’s ability to fund its public schools is calculated by:
  • **70% Property Wealth Factor**
    • Determined using a town’s Equalized Net Grand List per Capita (ENGLPC), compared to the state median town ENGLPC, as calculated annually by OPM
    • Most recent ECS formula used 90% Property Wealth Factor
  • **30% Income Wealth Factor**
    • Determined using a town’s Median Household Income (MHI), compared to the state median MHI, as calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey
    • Most recent ECS formula used 10% Income Wealth Factor

• Formula lowers Statewide Guaranteed Wealth Level from 1.5 to 1.35, creating more equitable distribution of state education aid.

• Maintains minimum aid ratio of 10% for Alliance Districts and reduces minimum aid ratio for all other districts from 2% to 1% (guarantees all districts some ECS aid).

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Additional Funding for Towns in Need

- Formula adds additional funding for communities that have a Public Investment Communities (PIC) index score of over 300.
  - PIC index is calculated annually by OPM and measures the relative wealth and need of CT’s towns.

- If a town has one of the top 19 highest PIC Index scores, under the new formula, the town will receive a bonus of three to six percentage points to its Base Aid Ratio, which determines each community’s ability to financially support its public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town’s PIC Index Rank</th>
<th>Additional % Points Added to Base Aid Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>6 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4 percentage points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>3 percentage points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Phase-in Plan

- New formula would begin in FY 2019 and be phased in over 10 years.
- Alliance Districts that would otherwise receive a decrease in aid, according to the new formula, are permanently held harmless at FY 2017 grant amounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase-in Schedule</th>
<th>FY 2019</th>
<th>FY 2020-2027</th>
<th>FY 2028</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towns Receiving Increase in ECS Funding over FY 2017 Grant</td>
<td>Increase phased in by 4.1%</td>
<td>Increase phased in by 10.66% per year</td>
<td>Towns receive 100% of their ECS grant, as calculated by formula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns Receiving Decrease in ECS Funding Compared to FY 2017 Grant</td>
<td>Decrease phased out by 25%</td>
<td>Decrease phased out by 8.33% per year</td>
<td>Towns receive 100% of their ECS grant, as calculated by formula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
**Alliance Districts “held harmless”**

- Budget uses both the original and updated Alliance District lists, resulting in 33 districts being held harmless

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ansonia</th>
<th>Hartford</th>
<th>Putnam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>Killingly</td>
<td>Stamford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeport</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Thompson*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Meriden</td>
<td>Torrington*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danbury</td>
<td>Middletown</td>
<td>Vernon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>Naugatuck</td>
<td>Waterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hartford</td>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>West Haven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Haven</td>
<td>New Haven</td>
<td>Winchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Windsor</td>
<td>New London</td>
<td>Windham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groton*</td>
<td>Norwalk</td>
<td>Windsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamden</td>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>Windsor Locks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* New Alliance District beginning in fiscal year 2018

Source: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Example of How Phase-in Plan Works

- It is important to remember that the new formula would be calculated on an annual basis using updated district and town data.
- As a result, a town’s calculated ECS grant will change as its district and town inputs change.
- Additionally, as a town’s calculated ECS grant changes, so will the difference between the town’s calculated ECS grant and its FY 2017 ECS grant, which will impact the phase-in schedule of the town’s grant.

Using Bristol as our sample Connecticut town, below is a hypothetical example of how a change in district enrollment (in this case a 5% increase) — with all other inputs remaining the same — would impact a town’s ECS grant for a given year (FY 2020) compared to if all of the district/town inputs remained constant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Town</th>
<th>FY 2017 Actual</th>
<th>FY 2018 Actual with Holdbacks</th>
<th>FY 2019 Projected</th>
<th>Estimated FY 2020 if District/Town Inputs Remain the Same</th>
<th>Estimated FY 2020 if District Enrollment Increases 5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>$44,853,676</td>
<td>$44,603,676</td>
<td>$45,317,623</td>
<td>$46,523,886</td>
<td>$46,938,417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Areas for Improvement
Maintains More than 10 Different Formulas

• New ECS formula only applies to local public schools

• All other types of Connecticut public schools (magnet schools, local and state charter schools, CTHSS, vo-ag schools, Open Choice) will continue to be funded by 10 other formulas/statutory amounts

• All other formulas not based on student and community needs

• Continuation of more than 10 different formulas also continues the challenges many districts have experienced related to choice programs charging tuition
Low-income Metric Remains a Challenge

• Use of FRPL eligibility as a proxy for identifying low-income students has become functionally unusable for the purposes of a school finance system.

• Need for a more accurate, verifiable proxy for low-income students is growing quickly as a result of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the federal Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010.
  • To qualify for CEP, at least 40 percent of a school or district’s enrollment must be identified as eligible for FRPL via direct certification.

• As higher-need districts adopt CEP district-wide, there is no incentive to collect household income information from students, resulting in inaccurate FRPL identification rates.

• As a result, an alternative proxy for measuring low-income students will need to be identified in order to effectively and accurately provide critical resources to higher-need students.

Funding for Special Education

• Formula does not disentangle special education funding from ECS grant, and instead leaves state aid for special education “incorporated” into the foundation amount.
  • Approximately 22% of the foundation amount is attributable to special education.

• Continuing to incorporate special education funding into the foundation, while also reducing total ECS spending in FY 2018 and FY 2019, puts Connecticut at continued risk of violating its federal maintenance of support (MOS) requirement, which is the primary fiscal measure by which states are judged to be eligible for federal funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

• To be eligible for federal IDEA funding, a state cannot provide less state financial support for special education than it did in the preceding fiscal year.
  • If a state has been found to have failed to maintain support, the U.S. Secretary of Education may reduce federal funds to that state.

• By leaving special education funding incorporated into the ECS formula’s foundation, and then reducing ECS funding, Connecticut runs a serious risk of violating its MOS requirement and having its federal IDEA funding reduced.

Sources: Conn. Acts 17-2 (June Special Session).
Overall Formula Cost

- Despite a new, bipartisan biennial budget, Connecticut still faces significant fiscal challenges ahead.

- Declining revenues, continued growth of fixed costs, and looming unfunded pension obligations are expected to stress the State’s finances for the near future, potentially causing large deficits.

- As a result, the State could resort to not fully funding the formula (and its estimated total increase of $380 million) or abandon it altogether like it has in the past.

- At the beginning of FY 2014, Connecticut stopped using the most recent ECS formula because the State did not have enough money to fund the formula’s phase-in plan.

- With fiscal and economic obstacles, and a longer 10-year phase-in schedule, sticking to the new formula will be a continual challenge for the General Assembly.
For More Information
For More Information

For more information on the FY 2018/2019 education budget and ECS formula:
www.ctschoolfinance.org
FY 2018/2019 Budget Tab

For more information on the state’s budget and fiscal situation:
www.ctstatefinance.org