

Statement of Dr. Joseph Cirsuolo

My name is Joe Cirsuolo, and I am Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS). Several years ago, I was Superintendent of the Wallingford Public Schools and also the President of CAPSS. Most recently, I served as President of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), of which CAPSS is our state affiliate, and then went on to lead their Professional Development efforts nationwide.

I speak here today also as a member of the CCJEF Steering Committee and on behalf of other statewide education associations, local boards of education, and the thousands of educators across this state who similarly support this coalition and the Supreme Court appeal before us now.

We educators know what needs to be done to deliver high-quality schooling and equal educational opportunity for all.

We know that effective education begins at birth, with good nutrition, suitable housing, safe communities, and loving, nurturing parents who provide the kind of physical, emotional, and cognitive stimulation that's critical, most especially in the early years.

We know that children benefit from formal preschool experiences that help ready them for reading and the social and self-control skills necessary for success in kindergarten and the early grades.

We know that great teaching, ongoing assessment, and intensive research-based interventions maximize learning and are essential for disadvantaged children.

We also know that more time for learning — such as a longer school day and/or school year — is vital.

We know that effective professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and building and district administrators needs to be in place, and that their successful performance also depends on improving preparatory programs in higher education.

We know that health services, family resource centers, and parent coordinators are imperative in urban and all other areas that serve low-income and immigrant populations.

We know that a full range of curricular offerings that include the visual and performing arts, history and social studies, foreign languages, health, and other subjects that aren't part of the state's mastery tests are nevertheless equally important in preparing well-educated students and fulfilling the multifaceted purposes of public schooling.

We also know that gifted and talented enrichment programs physical education, a wide array of extracurricular offerings, and opportunities to participate in competitive team sports are all indispensable components of preparing the whole child and for motivating students to stay in school and diligently apply themselves to their studies.

And we know that there's strong research evidence supporting the need for schooling that is racially and economically integrated, for schools that pay special attention to the increasingly

multicultural and technological nature of our society, and for education to take place within modern, “green” and safe learning environments.

Yet we also know that every one of these critical aspects of quality schooling carries a very hefty pricetag, a pricetag that the State of Connecticut has so far been unwilling to pay.

Yet if this State is to reclaim and retain its long-established ranking in the nation for high-quality public schools, then it’s time for the State to pay up — to deliver the resources that match up with the State’s own learning standards and high expectations.

We look to the Supreme Court to ensure that the State of Connecticut gives us educators the tools to accomplish those education reforms which we all know must be accomplished if this State is to compete in the global economy and to sustain the unique quality of life that we cherish.

For all these reasons, preK-12 educators in Connecticut strongly support this lawsuit and this extremely important appeal. Short of an affirmation by the Supreme Court that students are entitled to a sound public education that meets some reasonably high standard, we are all doomed to a continued backsliding by the State of its obligation to fund our children’s future.