

Statement of Mayor Mark Lauretti

My name is Mark Lauretti, and for the past 17 years, I have served as Mayor of the City of Shelton. I am also the recently elected President of the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding.

We should all recognize that this is an historic moment for our communities and our state. In taking this appeal, our Supreme Court is going to be considering a fundamental question: What kind of education do our children deserve, and is our state government — with its broken education formula — failing our children?

As a mayor, I think the writing on the wall is pretty clear. This is budget season for us. And let me tell you that in Shelton, I pride myself for having boosted local education spending since my election in 1991, both by supporting the Board of Education's budget, which has doubled over that period, and by investing more than \$150 million in capital improvements to the schools. But despite spending nearly two-thirds of our local budget on the schools, our effort is quite simply not enough to meet the educational challenges we face in turning out a youth workforce that can successfully compete in the global economy.

This is why tomorrow's oral arguments are so important. We need to finally hold the State, our leaders, and their education formula accountable. For too long, the State has unconstitutionally shifted its share of responsibility onto municipalities.

Nearly four years ago, we created this coalition to give our schoolchildren and their parents a real voice, a constructive and research-driven nonpartisan organization aimed at collectively pushing the Executive and Legislative branches of state government to improve our schools of their own volition, and if necessary (and it was), to bring forward this suit to obtain the assistance of the Judicial branch. Now that we are before the Connecticut Supreme Court, we are confident that all our hard work so far has been worth it and that the Court will reinforce students' constitutional right to an adequate education.

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