



Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding

February 7, 2008

To: Education Committee Members
From: Steve Cassano, CCJEF Executive Director
Dianne Kaplan deVries, CCJEF Project Director
Re: CCJEF education adequacy/equity lawsuit

As the Education Committee's work gets underway, we felt it imperative to bring to your attention recent developments in the *CCJEF v Rell* education adequacy and equity lawsuit.

The attached overview describes our appeal of a Superior Court judge's pre-trial ruling that under the Connecticut constitution, there is no right to a "suitable" education. CCJEF believes — as presumably do most legislators, educators, employers, and parents — that the meaning of the constitution's education clause inherently implies the right to a substantive, quality education and not just the right to free and equally minimal public schooling.

The CT Supreme Court has accepted our appeal on expedited review, with oral arguments probably to occur in April and a decision expected later in the summer. Immediately thereafter, preparations for trial will proceed apace, either on both the adequacy and equity claims, or on equity grounds alone, should the Court fail to reverse the lower court's decision striking down the adequacy claims.

In the interim, during this short legislative session, CCJEF will be urging the Education Committee and fellow legislators to ...

- Make every effort to increase the 2008-09 ECS allocation above the currently budgeted 4.4% increase over last year, lest it be impossible to meet the promised 5-year phase-in that should result in an additional \$1.1 billion in annual ECS funding (otherwise, the projected 2-year increase will amount to less than one-quarter of the total to be phased-in)
- Restore the Governor's proposed \$1.8 million decrease in Priority District funding
- Lower the Special Education Excess Cost reimbursement threshold from 4.5 to 2.5 times a district's regular program per pupil expenditure
- Fully fund the pupil transportation and adult education grants, removing their caps
- Add no new high school testing or graduation requirements unless the local costs of implementing the new mandates are fully paid by the state, including the added cost of dropout prevention, remediation, and other curricular and pupil support services necessary to ensure that every student has equal opportunity to meet those higher standards
- Reject proposals for property tax caps, which inevitably impinge upon municipalities' ability to raise local funds for their schools, and reject any legislative proposals that place additional financial burdens on cities and towns and their boards of education

We look forward to discussing the above matters with you in the coming weeks.