

Connecticut Coalition  
*for Justice in* Education Funding



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE PRESS RELEASE: OCTOBER 12, 2015 CONTACTS: JIM FINLEY, CCJEF CONSULTANT, 203 804-6895**

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**CCJEF MOURNS THE PASSING OF DR. DIANNE KAPLAN DEVRIES**

It is with deep sadness that the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding [CCJEF] announces the passing of Dr. Dianne Kaplan deVries on Sunday, October 11, after a valiant battle with cancer.



Dr. deVries founded CCJEF ([www.ccjef.org](http://www.ccjef.org)) 11 years ago and served as Project Director since the coalition's inception. Her responsibilities included leading CCJEF's research, policy development, and advocacy efforts in support of the coalition's landmark litigation on behalf of Connecticut's schoolchildren: *CCJEF v. Rell*. This case, the culmination of a 17-year commitment by Dianne in Connecticut to equal educational opportunity and equity and adequacy in PK-12 public school finance, will commence trial in early January 2016. "Dianne Kaplan deVries was a tireless advocate for the rights of all Connecticut public schoolchildren

-- regardless of economic background, race or town of residence -- to receive the quality education our state constitution promises and requires. The passion, intelligence and commitment that Dianne brought to educational equity and adequacy is unsurpassed. Our friend and colleague will be sorely missed. In this sad time, all of us in CCJEF rededicate ourselves to ensuring that her dream of equal educational opportunity is realized." said Herbert C. Rosenthal, CCJEF President.

"Dr. Dianne Kaplan deVries will be in the forefront when the history of equal educational opportunity in Connecticut is written. At great personal sacrifice, Dianne dedicated over 17 years of her life to righting the wrongs of our state's PK-12 education finance system. It is because of her singular and indefatigable efforts that the work of CCJEF will continue." said James J. Finley, CCJEF Consultant.

### **Dr. Dianne Kaplan deVries: Background**

Equal educational opportunity and PK-12 school finance have been the focus of Dianne's work for several decades. She earned a master's degree in Multicultural Education and a doctorate in Education Policy, Research, and Administration from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Her experience in teaching and education administration spans preschool through college levels, but much of her career has been in the form of large-scale research projects aimed at informing federal education policies, program evaluation and cost-effectiveness studies, and technical assistance consulting on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education and numerous state departments of education. For example, her research and consulting has included substantial work on ESEA/Title I, IDEA, Blue Ribbon Schools, adult education, preschool, and after-school programs, as well as the costing out of No Child Left Behind for the State of Connecticut and more than a dozen other states.

For the past 17 years Dianne had been steeped in efforts to bring about long-needed school finance reform here in Connecticut. From 1998 to 2003, she served as the education adequacy consultant to Updike, Kelly & Spellacy in the *Johnson v. Rowland* adequacy and equity lawsuit brought by the firm on behalf of a dozen municipalities and their school children. When that case was withdrawn for lack of funding, she proceeded to build a much larger statewide coalition and to secure the pro bono services of both Yale Law School and the prestigious New York law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton to represent plaintiffs in a comprehensive constitutional challenge to the state's education funding system. Today that decade-old coalition, CCJEF, includes communities that are home to nearly half of the state's public school children and whose schools educate more than three-fourths of all Connecticut's low-income, minority, and limited-English students.

**In 2010 the CCJEF v. Reil lawsuit won an historic pre-trial decision by the Connecticut Supreme Court: that under the education clause of the state constitution, public school children are entitled not just to a free and equal education but also to an adequate (quality) education, and the state must pay for it. Trial on the merits of plaintiffs' adequacy and equity claims is scheduled to begin January 2015 in Hartford Superior Court.**

Dianne maintained an office and weekday residence in Hartford, but her primary home was in New Hampshire, where her husband, Willem Anton deVries, is a philosophy professor at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. They have two grown sons, both of whom were philosophy majors and have pursued successful careers in high- tech R&D, and three adorable, highly energetic young grandsons.

## **CCJEF: Reform CT's School Finance System To Ensure**

## **EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

## **& QUALITY**

## **SCHOOLING FOR ALL**