

# Hartford Courant

## Commentary

April 14, 2026

### Opinion: Connecticut must renew its commitment to public education



MediaNews Group/The Mercury News via Getty Images, MediaNews Group via Getty Images

Our shared commitment reflects what we hear every day from parents, educators, and community members across Connecticut: our public schools matter, and they must be adequately supported. (MediaNews Group/The Mercury News via Getty Images, MediaNews Group via Getty Images)

By [PATRICE MCCARTHY](#) and [FRAN RABINOWITZ](#) | Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents

Connecticut's public schools are at a crossroads. In communities large and small, local leaders are working every day to meet rising expectations for student success, while managing rapidly increasing costs. Boards of education and superintendents are united in a simple message: the state must do more to support its public schools.

That is why the [Connecticut Association of Boards of Education](#) (CABE) and the [Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents](#) (CAPSS) stand together in strong support of legislative proposals to increase the foundation level in the [Education Cost Sharing](#) grant. These proposals represent an important and necessary step toward restoring balance to how we fund education in Connecticut and ensuring that every student, in every zip code, has access to the opportunities they deserve.

For more than a decade, [ECS](#)—the state's primary education funding mechanism—has failed to keep pace with reality. The ECS foundation, which is intended to reflect the cost of educating a child in Connecticut, has remained frozen at \$11,525 since 2013. Over that same period, the cumulative inflation rate has increased by approximately 40 percent. In practical terms, that means the state's investment in each student has eroded dramatically, leaving school districts to do more with far less.

At the same time, the demands placed on our schools have grown significantly. Districts are serving far more multilingual learners and students with disabilities, populations that require additional resources and specialized supports. Costs for staffing, transportation, energy, and instructional materials have all risen sharply. Special education, in particular, continues to place extraordinary pressure on local budgets, driven both by increasing need and by workforce shortages that often require districts to rely on outside providers. Students need these services to maximize their potential.

The result is a widening gap between what our schools are expected to deliver and the resources available to them. Many cities and towns have worked hard to fill that gap, but they cannot do it alone. Taxpayers are already stretched thin, and Connecticut continues to lag behind much of the nation in the share of education funding provided by the state. Without meaningful increases in state support, districts will be forced to make difficult decisions that ultimately impact students—larger class sizes, reduced programming, and fewer opportunities. And ultimately it is the students who pay the price.

Fortunately, legislators have recognized this need and proposed to make education funding a priority.

By increasing the ECS foundation to better reflect current costs, these bills acknowledge a fundamental truth: educational equity requires sustained financial commitment. They also include thoughtful provisions that respond to real conditions in our schools, from providing greater flexibility in the use of funds for special education services, to recognizing the unique needs of regional and rural communities.

But these bills should not be viewed as a one-time fix. They must be the beginning of a long-term, predictable approach to education funding, as school board leaders and school superintendents need stability to plan effectively, invest in their workforce, and build programs that support students over time. A multi-year strategy to bring ECS in line with actual costs—followed by regular, inflation-based adjustments—would provide that stability while steadily reducing inequities across communities.

It is also important to recognize what is at stake. Adequate education funding is not an isolated policy goal; it is the foundation for everything else we ask our schools to do. It supports early literacy efforts that set students on a path to success. It enables districts to provide inclusive, high-quality special education services. It helps attract and retain excellent educators. And it allows schools to offer the academic and career pathways that prepare students for life beyond graduation.

Most importantly, it affirms a core Connecticut value: that every child, regardless of where they live, deserves access to a high-quality public education. Connecticut has long established itself as a national leader in public education, and we all want to see that continue.

The General Assembly has an opportunity this session to take a meaningful step toward fulfilling that promise. Addressing the foundation level will represent real progress toward a more equitable and sustainable partnership between the state and local communities.

As leaders representing both boards of education and superintendents, we urge lawmakers to act. Our shared commitment reflects what we hear every day from parents, educators, and community members across Connecticut: our public schools matter, and they must be adequately supported.

The time to act is now.

*Patrice McCarthy is executive director and general counsel for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. Fran Rabinowitz is the executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents.*