



## **Testimony on Senate Bill 1068**

Submitted by Isabel Blank, External Affairs Manager

March 18, 2019

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Isabel Blank. I am Manager, External Affairs at the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, and I am writing to testify in support of **Senate Bill 1068: An Act Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement**. For questions or follow up, please contact me at [isabel@yankeeinstitute.org](mailto:isabel@yankeeinstitute.org).

We commend the committee for recognizing the need to change the Minimum Budget Requirement so that towns have greater autonomy to reduce their budgets when student population decreases. However, this bill does not go far enough.

The Minimum Budget Requirement is a state mandate that should be repealed. It assumes that the leaders of cities and towns do not know how to effectively manage their own education budgets, and that they do not value education as they should.

Of course, this is not true.

Our local lawmakers recognize the importance of a quality education system just as much as state lawmakers and have the local knowledge to best address the needs of their students. Local lawmakers must be responsive to their constituents, most of whom understand the role a high-quality education system plays in a town's ability to grow and thrive.

The Minimum Budget Requirement creates a disincentive for school districts to find ways to creatively cut their budget, while at the same time maintaining – or increasing – educational success.

With the many innovations to education in recent years, there are new and exciting ways to deliver quality education at a lower cost. The Minimum Budget Requirement stops innovation – or even the possibility of innovation – from happening.

We have already seen huge losses in school-aged children and population decline is projected to continue. Over the past 10 years, the number of students attending Connecticut public schools has declined by more than 37,000 students or 6.5%.

We believe one of the reasons we are not able to attract young families to this state is because of the high cost of living here, including our very high property taxes, which make it difficult to own a home. The Minimum Budget Requirement is one of the many reasons our property taxes are so high.

We encourage you to pass this bill but offer a better option; to eliminate the state's Minimum Budget Requirement completely.