

## Testimony on S.287, Draft No. 1.5

### Revision to Pupil Weights

**Testimony To:** House Committee on Ways and Means

**Respectfully Submitted By:** Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education

**Date:** April 12, 2022

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I have previously provided testimony to this committee, other legislative committees, and the Task Force on this topic. My comments today are in response to a recent draft of the bill.

1. **Cost Containment** – I see this bill being a response to a specific legal question around equity in the funding system. I view the solutions being proposed as necessary but narrow technical improvements, not structural changes. I believe structural changes will be necessary soon to address cost containment. Initiatives such as special education funding, PreK, PCB remediation, facilities improvement, universal school meals, and the delivery of integrated social services such as mental health services will put new demands on education funding.
2. **Implementation Context** – I have been monitoring and participating in the deliberations around this policy throughout its development largely from a technical standpoint. I think there are pros and cons to the various models, but as I consider the context of the education system today relative to the pandemic and the uncharted waters in front of us for what we are calling education recovery work, I think we need to consider the specific context in which these changes would be implemented. The financial context for school districts has never been more uncertain, and education workforce issues are becoming more acute. I am concerned about school district capacity to implement changes in the funding system, and to explain those changes to local taxpayers. I think the best solution now would be the simplest one from an implementation standpoint.
3. **Agency Staffing** – The staffing capacity outlined in Section 13 of the bill is essential for successful implementation of its various provisions.
4. **District Quality Standards** – I support the creation of school district quality standards, a quality assurance process in regulation, and improved data reporting on these metrics as necessary for implementing this policy and for addressing longstanding quality and equity issues in education. These structures should be enacted prior to any evaluation of the goals of this bill. I do not believe such an evaluation could be performed without these other structures being in place.