FAIRNESS FOR TOWNS IN RHODE ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

I am Joanne DeVoe and am speaking to you as a taxpayer of Warren. I am here to request that the state provide education formula funds fairly to all regional school districts.

RI has four regional districts. The definitions section of R.I.G.L. Chapter 16-7 Foundation Level School Support, states, "'Community' means any city, town, or regional school district established pursuant to law … provided, however, that the member towns of Chariho … shall constitute separate and individual communities for the purpose of determining and distributing the foundation level school support … [16-7-16(5)]. This section was in place before the formula changes in 2010 and has not been altered since. The Chariho towns, Charlestown, Richmond and Hopkinton, have very different tax bases per pupil. The towns in the other regional school districts have varying tax bases too; Bristol's tax base is much larger than Warren's.

I am requesting that the Fair Funding Formula Working Group recommend that section 16-7-16(5) be amended so that all of the regional school districts are treated the same as Chariho. My understanding is that the formula funds go directly to Chariho's three towns. These towns in turn give all formula funds to Chariho as part of their local education appropriation.

Warren went to court because the data for Warren and Bristol were being lumped together to calculate the formula, costing Warren around $2 million a year; see the chart for FY 2014. After RI Superior Court ruled in Warren's favor this spring, RIDE calculated the formula for each town separately and directed the school district to place the funds in separate accounts; see the chart for FY 2016. But since Bristol is twice the size of Warren, its six school committee members outvoted Warren's three and directed Warren to pay the amount approved for FY 2016 by the Joint Finance Committee before the court ruling was announced. Warren is paying the lesser amount that the court requires. Bristol is appealing the court ruling.

This issue can be settled fairly for all RI towns in regional school districts by having formula funds sent to each town and requiring that the towns send all formula funds to the regional school districts along with their local share. Thank you.

Joanne DeVoe, joanned@qis.net, 247-3004, November 24, 2015

Rhode Island General Laws, Title 16 Education, Chapter 16-7 Foundation Level School Support, Section 16-7-16:

§ 16-7-16 **Definitions.** – The following words and phrases used in §§ 16-7-15 to 16-7-34 have the following meanings:

(1) "Adjusted equalized weighted assessed valuation" means the equalized weighted assessed valuation of a community as determined by the department of revenue or as apportioned by the commissioner pursuant to the provisions of § 16-7-21;

(2) "Average daily membership" means the average number of pupils in a community during a school year as determined pursuant to the provisions of § 16-7-22, less any students who are served in a program operated by the state and funded through the permanent foundation education aid formula pursuant to chapter 16-7.2;

(3) "Basic education program" means the cost of education of resident pupils in grades twelve (12) and below in average daily membership for the reference year as determined by the mandated minimum program level;

(4) "Certified personnel" means all persons who are required to hold certificates issued by or under the authority of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education;

(5) **"Community" means any city, town, or regional school district established pursuant to law** andr the department of children, youth, and families; provided, however, that the department of children, youth, and families shall not have those administrative responsibilities and obligations as set forth in chapter 2 of this title; **provided, however, that the member towns of the Chariho regional high school district, created by P.L. 1958, chapter 55 as amended, shall constitute separate and individual communities for the purpose of determining and distributing the foundation level school support** including state aid for noncapital excess expenses for the special education of children with disabilities provided for in § 16-24-6 for all grades financed in whole or in part by the towns irrespective of any regionalization and any school operated by the state department of elementary and secondary education;

(6) "Department of children, youth, and families" means that department created pursuant to chapter 72 of title 42. For purposes of this section, §§ 16-7-20, 16-24-2, and 42-72-5(b)(22), "children" means those children who are placed, assigned, or otherwise accommodated for residence by the department of children, youth, and families in a state operated or supported community residence licensed by a state agency and the residence operates an educational program approved by the department of elementary and secondary education;

(7) "Equalized weighted assessed valuation" means the equalized weighted assessed valuation for a community as determined by the division of property valuation pursuant to the provisions of § 16-7-21;

(8) "Full time equivalency students" means the time spent in a particular activity divided by the amount of time in a normal school day;

(9) "Incentive entitlement" means the sum payable to a local school district under the formula used;

(10) "Mandated minimum program level" means the amount that shall be spent by a community for every pupil in average daily membership as determined pursuant to the provisions of § 16-7-18;

(11) "Reference year" means the next year prior to the school year immediately preceding that in which the aid is to be paid. For the purposes of calculating the permanent foundation education formula aid as described in § 16-7.2-3, the reference date shall be one year prior to the year in which aid is paid; and

(12) "Regularly employed" and "service" as applied to certified personnel have the same meaning as defined in chapter 16 of this title.

Note: In (5), bold is added by Joanne DeVoe

CURRENT RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION FOUNDATION FORMULA CALCULATED BOTH FOR BRISTOL AND WARREN TOGETHER AND FOR EACH TOWN SEPARATELY, FY 2014

Towns	PK-12 RADM	FRPL RADM	CIA $8,897/Pupil	SSF=0.4CIA =$3,559	Total Foundation	%FRPL PK-6	SSRC	SSR	State Share	State Share/Pupil
A	B	C	D=Bx$8,897	E=Cx$3,559	F=D+E	G	H	I	J=FxI	K=J/B
Bristol	2,236	666	$19,893,692	$2,370,294	$22,263,986	29.1%	22.2%	25.9%	$5,766,372	$2,579
Warren	1,268	568	$11,281,396	$2,021,512	$13,302,908	42.9%	52.1%	47.7%	$6,345,487	$5,004
Bristol/Warren RSD	3,429	1,288	$30,507,813	$4,583,734	$35,091,547	34.2%	33.0%	33.6%	$11,792,640	$3,439

The RI education funding formula is intended to provide higher percentage state shares to cities and towns with lower property tax capacity per pupil and higher percentages of poor children. The current formula distributes state education formula funds directly to three of the four regional school districts, including the Bristol Warren Regional School District. If the state funds were distributed directly to the towns instead, Warren would gain significantly and Bristol would lose because Warren has a lower property tax base per pupil and a higher percentage of poor children than Bristol:

For Warren, the State Share funds would increase by $1,565 per pupil x 1,268 pupils = $1,984,420;

For Bristol, the State Share funds would decrease by $860 per pupil x 2,236 pupils = $1,922,960.

For the State, the cost would be $5,766,372 + $6,345,487 = $12,111,859 which is $319,219 more than $11,792,640.

The fourth regional school district, Chariho, does have its formula funds distributed directly to its three towns, Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond.

Notes:

--Data for Towns in Columns B, C, G and H are from an Email from Kristen Cole, RIDE, to Joanne DeVoe dated November 15, 2013.

--Data for Bristol Warren Regional School District is from," FY 2014 Final Formula Calculations", RIDE.

--Current formula for Bristol & Warren is being phased in over a 10 year period beginning in FY 2012.

--Col. B: PK-12 RADM is Resident Average Daily Membership, grades PreK-12.

--Col. C: FRPL RADM is RADM in the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

--Col. D: Core Instructional Amount of $8,897 per pupil is multiplied by PK-12 Resident Average Daily Membership.

--Col. E: Student Success Factor of 40% of CIA or $3,559 is multiplied by Free & Reduced Price Lunch RADM.

--Col. F: Total Foundation = (CIA x PK-12 RADM) + (0.4CIA x FRPL RADM). Column F = Column D + Column E.

--Col. G: % FRPL PK-6 is percentage of RADM in grades PreK-6 that are in the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

--Col. H: SSRC is the State Share for the Community calculated according to R.I.G.L. 16-7-20 and 21.

--Col. I: % of PK-6 FRPL and SSRC are combined in a quadratic mean calculation resulting in the State Share Ratio, in accordance with R.I.G.L. 16-7.24.

--Col. J: State Share is the State Share Ratio mutiplied by the Total Foundation. Column J = Column I x Column F.

--Col. K: State Share Per Pupil equals State Share divided by RADM. Column K = Column J / Column B.

Joanne DeVoe, November, 2015

CURRENT RHODE ISLAND EDUCATION FOUNDATION FORMULA CALCULATED BOTH FOR BRISTOL AND WARREN TOGETHER AND FOR EACH TOWN SEPARATELY, FY 2016

Towns	PK-12 RADM	FRPL RADM	CIA $8,928/Pupil	SSF=0.4CIA =$3,571	Total Foundation	%FRPL PK-6	SSRC	SSR	State Share	State Share/Pupil
	B	C	D=Bx$8,928	E=Cx$3,571	F=D+E	G	H	I=J=FxI	J=FxI	K=J/B
	A									
Bristol	2,047	637	$18,275,616	$2,274,854	$20,550,470	34.4%	16.3%	26.9%	$5,531,571	$2,702
Warren	1,280	587	$11,427,840	$2,096,294	$13,524,134	49.0%	54.2%	51.7%	$6,987,307	$5,459
Bristol/Warren RSD	3,327	1,224	$29,703,456	$4,371,149	$34,074,605	40.0%	32.7%	36.5%	$12,437,231	$3,738

The RI education funding formula is intended to provide higher percentage state shares to cities and towns with lower property tax capacity per pupil and higher percentages of poor children. For FY 2012 to 2015, the state combined the data for Bristol & Warren to calculate the formula. For FY 2016, in response to a Superior Court judgment in Warren's favor, the state calculated the formula funds separately for each town and these funds are deposited in separate accounts at the school district. Bristol has appealed the court ruling. The ruling means:

For Warren, the State Share funds increase by $1,721 per pupil x 1,280 pupils = $2,202,880.

For Bristol, the State Share funds decrease by $1,036 per pupil x 2,047 pupils = $2,120,692.

For the State, the cost is $5,531,571 + $6,987,307 = $12,518,878 which is $81,648 more than $12,437,230.

One of the four regional school districts, Chariho, does have its formula funds distributed directly to its three towns, Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond.

Notes:

--Data for Towns is from, "FY 2016 Formula Calculations (updated March 2015 data)", RIDE

--Data for Bristol/Warren RSD in columns B, C, D, E and F are the data for the 2 towns added together; data for column G is from RIDE.

--Current formula is being phased in over a 10 year period beginning in FY 2012.

--Col. B: PK-12 RADM is Resident Average Daily Membership, grades PreK-12.

--Col. C: FRPL RADM is RADM in the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

--Col. D: Core Instructional Amount of $8,928 per pupil is multiplied by PK-12 Resident Average Daily Membership.

--Col. E: Student Success Factor of 40% of CIA or $3,571 is multiplied by Free & Reduced Price Lunch RADM.

--Col. F: Total Foundation = (CIA x PK-12 RADM) + (0.4CIA x FRPL RADM). Column F = Column D + Column E.

--Col. G: % FRPL PK-6 is percentage of RADM in grades PreK-6 that are in the federal free and reduced price lunch program.

--Col. H: SSRC is the State Share for the Community calculated according to R.I.G.L. 16-7-20 and 21.

--Col. I: % of PK-6 FRPL and SSRC are combined in a quadratic mean calculation resulting in the State Share Ratio, in accordance with R.I.G.L. 16-7.2-4.

--Col. J: State Share is the State Share Ratio multiplied by the Total Foundation. Column J = Column I x Column F.

--Col. K: State Share Per Pupil equals State Share divided by RADM. Column K = Column J / Column B.

Joanne DeVoe, November, 2015