

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Giuliano Supports Education Reforms



Proposals Would Boost State Aid to Education, Increase Accountability

State Rep. Marilyn Giuliano, R-23rd District, Old Lyme, Lyme, Old Saybrook, Westbrook, supports Gov. M. Jodi Rell's proposal for the state to pay an average of 50 percent of local public school operating expenses.

Rep. Giuliano, who also served last year as a member of the Governor's Commission on Education Finance, said, "This is something that has been discussed for years. Now is the time to reform the Educational Cost Sharing program in a meaningful way."

"The state has set a target of providing 50 percent of public education costs," she added. "In 1990, the state paid about 46 per cent. In recent years, the state's average share has dropped as low as 38 percent. In some towns, it is down to 10 percent or less."

Rep. Giuliano said the governor's proposed budget presented to the legislature on Feb. 7 recommends an increase in state aid to education by \$1.1 billion over the next five years to a total of \$2.7 billion.

"The governor takes bold steps to address education issues, including funding and accountability," said Rep. Giuliano. "I hope the House and Senate leadership gives the governor's proposal a full and fair hearing."

Recent trends in education funding have shown state support for education is diminishing and the burden shifting to local property taxes, said Rep. Giuliano.

"That trend needs to be reversed," she added. "Under the governor's proposal, all communities would receive at least a three percent increase."

Other educational improvements are proposed in the governor's budget. In a program for babies born with specific risk factors, the governor is proposing an expansion of the Birth to Three program. This expansion will provide eligibility for very low birth weight babies, babies born prematurely at fewer than 28 weeks, children with significant delays in speech and children with mild hearing loss. The funding will provide early intervention and address potential learning problems early.

The governor also is providing added funding for early childhood education workers.

Also, the state Department of Education will begin to implement a new accountability system, including new state benchmarks for academic and behavioral accountability. Under these benchmarks, the state will intervene when schools and districts underperform.

On the higher education side of the budget, Rep. Giuliano noted that Gov. Rell is recommending \$25 million in additional student financial aid for both public and independent colleges. This will help eliminate barriers to student access to education in Connecticut.

Rep. Giuliano is ranking member of the legislature's Higher Education and Advancement Committee. She serves the 23rd District of Old Lyme, Lyme, Old Saybrook and Westbrook in the state House of Representatives.