



PRESS RELEASE: Commissioner Has Not Studied the Cost of an Adequate Education

Today, Frank Edelblut, Commissioner of the NH Department of Education, testified as a witness in the ongoing *ConVal School District v. State of New Hampshire* school funding trial. In his testimony, Edelblut reiterated what he said in his deposition in the case, that he and the department have not studied if it is possible to provide an adequate education with the funding provided by the State.

“For the Commissioner to say that he has never done any analysis of what it actually costs to educate a student in New Hampshire, and to admit that his department has never studied the issue, is pretty damning,” said Zack Sheehan, NHSFFP Executive Director. “The Department of Education has all the data it needs to figure out what it costs school districts to provide a constitutionally adequate education, and to then compare that figure to the amount of money actually provided to districts by the State. While the legislature ultimately has the power to change funding levels, it’s well within the purview of the Commissioner to put time and energy into analyzing the current funding levels, determining if they are adequate, and asking lawmakers for additional funding. Instead, he has prioritized spending time and resources advocating for other policy changes like gutting common core standards and directing public funds away from public schools.”

During the afternoon, the plaintiffs presented clear evidence that the State pays more per pupil to non-district schools, like charter schools and Prenda Learning pods. District schools must provide a wider array of services than these programs, and therefore have higher costs per pupil that are not supported by state funding and instead shifted onto local property tax payers.

The State kept returning to the argument that the statutes passed by the legislature defining an adequate education are for the legislature alone to judge and amend as they see fit.

“Ultimately, the legislature has the ability to increase per pupil funding to district schools.” Sheehan said. “The Commissioner’s testimony today should make it clear to every legislator that our State needs to find answers to fix our unfair school funding system, and that begins with knowing what it actually costs to provide students with a constitutionally adequate education.”

Commissioner Edelblut will resume his testimony at a later date in the trial.

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The mission of the NHSFFP, a registered 501(c)(3), is to inform the public about the condition of New Hampshire public schools and their funding; to advocate for changes to make the system more equitable for students and taxpayers alike; and, if necessary, to prosecute, manage, control, and/or participate in a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the system for funding education in New Hampshire.

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