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CCM commends Governor, legislators for protecting and increasing municipal aid

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Jim Finley, Executive Director and CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, said this evening, (Tuesday-Wednesday, May 8-9) that “CCM commends the Governor and the General Assembly for stepping up to protect and increase municipal aid in both the state budget and education reform packages as approved by both chambers of the legislature. This is especially noteworthy as the State continues to face fiscal challenges.”

The education reform package sustains a \$50 million increase in the Education Cost Sharing grant for towns and cities and increases the Priority School District Grant by \$5.2 million. Non-education municipal aid was increased by \$5.7 million under the State’s new Property Tax Relief Grant; while other major programs such as Town Aid Road, Pequot-Mohegan Fund, and State Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for Colleges and Hospitals and for State Property continue to be sustained.

“The Governor and state legislators clearly understand,” said Finley, “that Connecticut’s quality of life depends on sustaining the local services delivered by our 169 towns and cities and the role municipal aid plays to help local governments restrain property taxes on residents and businesses. The municipal aid provided in this budget agreement for both the education and the town hall sides of municipal governments is sorely needed and greatly appreciated.

“CCM congratulates the Governor and the General Assembly for taking a big first step in reforming Connecticut’s public education system,” noted Finley. “Forged in the red hot furnace of political compromise, the enacted legislation will help address the nation’s largest achievement gap. But there is much more work to be done. Comprehensive education reform must include education **finance** reform in order to correct chronic state underfunding of PK-12 public education.

“For too long our towns and cities and their residential and business property taxpayers have borne an unfair burden of paying for PK-12 public education.” Finley emphasized “62 cents out of every property tax dollar in our state now goes to pay for public schools. Special education costs are spiraling and host communities pay the price. In order to meet its state constitutional responsibilities, Connecticut must act to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund PK-12 public education and ensure that all students receive an equitable and adequate public education. Next session, let’s build on this newly enacted legislation to keep the reform momentum going,” Finley concluded.

