

Connecticut

Sharda Jackson Smith

FUNDING PRIORITIES FOR P-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Governor Ned Lamont's FY2020 – FY2021 Biennium budget proposal sought to close “a \$1.5 billion deficit in FY 2020 and \$2.2 billion in FY 2021” by focusing on fiscal stability.¹ Strategies were proposed to reduce education cost at the district level, including establishing a commission to promote shared services, models of consolidation, and savings, investing in special education by funding staff at the Department of Education to establish Centers for Excellence, and prioritizing school construction more sharply on the regionalization of school districts and Centers for Excellence. In 2021, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program was established to “provide an interest rate subsidy on CHESLA loans to teachers who commit to teaching in one of Connecticut’s 33 highest need school districts.”² Another priority of the state has been the recruitment of minority teachers. Currently, this funding includes \$262,500 to aid K-12 schools in recruitment and \$320,134 in aid at the higher education level.³

CHANGES TO THE FUNDING FORMULA FOR P-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Connecticut’s formula continues to account for its foundation, need-student weights, a base aid ratio, public investment communities, a phase-in schedule (that will take a decade to implement [FY2020-2030]⁴), and other formula components. Lamont’s vision, as articulated in the biennium budget proposal, works to amend education cost sharing in the state by replacing the free and reduced-price lunch count in the formula with a direct certification count.⁵ Many education finance-based legislative efforts were unsuccessful in the last

1. Connecticut’s Official State Website. (2019). *A Path Forward: Recommended Budget for the FY 2020-2021 Biennium*. Retrieved from https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/Budget/2020_2021_Biennial_Budget/Gov-Lamont-FY20--FY21-Budget-Presentation-2-20-19.pdf

2. Connecticut’s Official State Website. (2021). *Governor Lamont Signs student loan subsidy legislation for educators who commit to serving in Connecticut’s highest need school districts*. The Office of Governor Ned Lamont. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/08-2021/Governor-Lamont-Signs-Student-Loan-Subsidy-Legislation-for-Educators>

3. A Path Forward: Recommended Budget for the FY 2020-2021 Biennium

4. School and State Finance Project. (2021). *Estimated ECS Phase-in Schedule, FY 2022*. New Haven, CT: Author. Retrieved from <https://ctschoolfinance.org/resource-assets/Estimated-ECS-Phase-in-Schedule-FY-2022.xlsx>

5. A Path Forward: Recommended Budget for the FY 2020-2021 Biennium

Sharda Jackson Smith, Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina Upstate

session, including a bill to introduce a “money-follows-the-child” mechanism to public education funding,⁶ a bill to improve funding and services for special education,⁷ and a bill to make revision to how public education is funded in the state to address issues of equity and systemic racism.⁸

PRESSING STATE ISSUES AFFECTING P-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

Coronavirus emergency relief funding in schools continues to be a top priority in the state of Connecticut. Funding for initiatives that will serve as gentle landing from an abrupt disruption of education practices has prompted continued federal support.⁹ A total of over \$1 billion through the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (also known as ARP ESSER) funding was released to Connecticut (\$737,279,916 in March 2021 and \$369,416,741 August 2021).¹⁰ Significant portions of the plan articulate the need to use the funding for “programs that have high start-up costs but have a lower or sustainable cost for long-term maintenance [and] investments that are heavily focused on measurement and considered impact so there is demonstrable proof that the programs merit long-term investment...”¹¹ An example of the types of programs include the Accelerated CT Summer Program grant, which awarded anywhere between \$50,000 and \$250,000 to 25 eligible applicants.¹² The legislature established a commission to analyze the disparate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups in the state.¹³

EXCLUSIVE TO P-12

The Connecticut Legislature was able to update the teachers’ retirement system

6. S.B. 949, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Conn. 2021).

7. H.B. 5779, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Conn. 2021).

8. H.B. 5620, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Conn. 2021).

9. Connecticut’s Official State Website. (2021). *Governor Lamont announces Federal Approval of Connecticut’s plan for coronavirus emergency relief funding in schools*. The Office of Governor Ned Lamont. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2021/08-2021/Governor-Lamont-Announces-Federal-Approval-of-Plan-For-Coronavirus-Relief-Funding-in-Schools>

10. Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller. (n.d.). *Budget*. Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller. Retrieved from <https://openbudget.ct.gov>

11. United States Department of Education. (2021). *Connecticut ARP ESSER State Plan Highlights*. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/Connecticut-1-pager-FINAL-1.pdf>

12. Connecticut’s Official State Website. (2021). *State department of Education Announces recipients of 2021 Summer Enrichment Grants*. The Office of Governor Ned Lamont. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2021/State-Department-of-Education-Announces-Recipients-of-2021-Summer-Enrichment-Grants>

13. H.B. 5614, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Conn. 2021).

statutes,¹⁴ including the definition of voluntary contributions, benefits for survivors of members, board rights, and the confines of rollover accounts and contributions.

STATE PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES¹⁵
\$13,643

ALLOCATION OF STATE DOLLARS¹⁶
\$11,191,243,856

PERCENT OF THE STATE BUDGET¹⁷
22.6%

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14. S.B. 1080, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Conn. 2021).

15. FY2020 – Derived from average of all districts; Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Per Pupil Expenditures by Funding Source (Summary), 2019-20 All Districts, All Schools*. Retrieved from http://edsight.ct.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_year=2019-20&_district=All+Districts&_school=All+Schools&_program=%2FCTDOE%2FEdSight%2FRelease%2FReporting%2FPublic%2FReports%2FStoredProcesses%2FEFSReportCardReport&_select=Submit

16. FY2022 Education Libraries & Museums Operating Expenses; Connecticut Office of the State Comptroller.

17. *Ibid.*

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