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How Does Connecticut Define Equity? Exploring Oppositions to House Bill 05003: An Act
Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut (2023).

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Trinity College, Educational Studies Class of 2024

EDUC 400: Senior Research Seminar

Professor Britney Jones, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The Board of Education and Connecticut Public Schools have been the subject of intense scrutiny for decades (Eaton, 2020). Connecticut House Bill 05003 (2023) (which from here on will be referred to as CT HB 05003), introduced by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA), emerged as an issue among residents and education professionals due to its proposed amendments to education funding acts. This essay examines the opposition to HB 05003 by examining the testimonies of Connecticut residents and education professionals presented through public hearing testimonies. Through an analysis of these testimonies, this essay seeks to answer three key research questions: how and in what ways did Connecticut residents and education professionals oppose HB 05003 in their public hearing testimonies? What specific demands or requests did individuals and organizations express in their opposition to HB 05003? And what underlying messages can be deciphered from the language and initiatives proposed by opponents of CT HB 05003? The analysis of these testimonies culminates in that the 29 testimonies opposing House Bill 05003 highlight the demand for transparency and accountability in Connecticut's school funding, advocating for a revised funding formula to improve resource allocation and address charter school spending issues, as well as proposing shifting from the current student counting method to open choice initiatives like a "universal funding following the student" approach. Through a careful examination of these testimonies, this essay aims to explain the complex concerns and ambitions underlying the opposition to CT HB 05003, shedding light on the complexities of education discourse, policy, and funding in Connecticut.

Looking back on my time in Connecticut's public schools, along with my recent experiences in classrooms and learning about education disparities, has opened my eyes to the inequality that exists in Connecticut Public Schools. These experiences showed me how different

factors affect students, like how much support teachers get or how resources are spread out. Studying the history of education disparities in Connecticut helped me see the big picture. In addition, my economics degree taught me about concepts like how market structure, market powers, and why it's so important to fund entities properly. Putting it all together, I'm inspired to push for fairer funding in education, so all kids get the support they need to succeed, no matter where they come from.

Connecticut House Bill 05003 (2023): An Act Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut

CT HB 05003 was proposed to amend education funding laws. The bill outlines equalization aid grants for towns, with varying percentages of base grant amounts and adjustments for different fiscal years. Setting out a timeline for grant changes, with different percentages applied to grant amounts for each year from 2018 to 2030. The bill also defines terms related to choice programs, such as interdistrict magnet schools and regional agricultural science centers, and establishes grant entitlements for these programs. The purpose of CT HB 05003 is to amend Connecticut's education funding statutes, specifically concerning equalization aid grants for towns and the establishment of grant entitlements for choice programs like interdistrict magnet schools and regional agricultural science centers. Choice programs, as defined in the bill, include interdistrict magnet school programs, regional agricultural science and technology centers, and the interdistrict public school attendance program. Our concern with the bill is regarding lines 412-415 and 1301-1304, "For the purposes of equalization aid ... a student enrolled in an interdistrict magnet school program shall be counted as a resident student" and, "a student enrolled in agricultural science and technology education shall be counted as a resident student". This is the double tally of students during the counting of student enrollment in Connecticut schools. Additionally, the bill itself is 49 pages long which is believed by oppositional testimonial writers to be too long and cannot perpetuate equity without a clear, public goal.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed here covers various aspects of education funding policy. Each article in the literature review contributes to a broad discussion of the challenges faced in ensuring fair and adequate funding for schools including state aid formulas and exploring racial language embedded in policy and discussions. The studies shed light on the intersectionality of race, politics, and socioeconomic factors in shaping education funding policies. By critically analyzing these works, a comprehensive overview of the ongoing discourse surrounding education funding reform emerges.

Education Funding Disparities and Solutions

The article “How to Design a State Education Aid Formula That Is Equitable, Adequate, and Politically Feasible: The Case of Connecticut” by Bo Zhao gives insight into Connecticut state school funding previous to CT House Bill 05003. It concerns educational aid formulas, addressing inequality in Connecticut schools including explaining districts' cost-capacity gap to evaluate the state's previous education aid distribution. The article concludes that larger-gap districts usually receive higher aid per pupil, yet significant inequality persists. The article then goes on to propose solutions such as a gap-based formula that allocates aid in terms of cost-capacity gaps that exist across districts.

The article offers valuable insight into some of the systems in use by Connecticut state school funding. Cost-capacity gaps provide a crucial metric to understand for evaluating Connecticut's' previous aid distribution as well as offer background toward understanding future aid policy. The metric helps assess how much a district's costs exceed its capacity to raise revenue. This helps to highlight areas of need in the state as well as measure what schools need

the most help to promote equity throughout the state, a reoccurring theme among education funding in the last decade. The article continues to explain how many of the larger-gap districts receive higher aid per pupil than lower-gap districts, yet inequalities in those districts persist. This offers valuable insight as to what processes and formulas have not worked so that future policymakers and researchers can learn from the poor results of previous formulas and try new avenues to evaluate topics such as student inequality and educational disparities.

The article provides context to CT HB 05003 and the demand for transparency and accountability in Connecticut's school funding. It sheds light on the complexities of educational aid formulas and the barriers faced in addressing inequality in this context, aligning with CT HB 05003. Discussing the cost-capacity gap and the persistent inequalities despite higher aid per pupil in larger-gap districts underscores the need for a revised funding formula to improve resource allocation and promote equity. Further, the proposed solutions offer potential approaches to address charter school spending issues and advocate for initiatives like a "universal funding following the student" approach.

The report “Measuring Disparities in Cost and Spending across Connecticut School Districts” By Bo Zhao and Nicholas Chiumenti looks into concerns of fairness and adequacy of public K–12 education funding in Connecticut by checking how much districts spend on education, considering factors like student needs. It finds big differences in spending among districts, even after state aid. Districts with more needs spend a lot more. Not enough spending leads to students not doing as well as they could. The report suggests a fairer and better way to give state aid, based on how much districts actually need. It says many districts need more money to meet their needs. In the last year studied, \$940 million more would have been needed

statewide. Even though money is tight due to COVID-19, it's important to keep investing in public education for Connecticut's future economy.

The summary discusses ongoing problems with how money is distributed for public schools in Connecticut. Despite trying to fix things before, some schools still get more money than others, especially those with more students in need. Not having enough money can hurt how well students do in school. The report suggests making changes to how money is given out, so it's fairer and better matches what each school needs. It also says schools might need more money to meet all their needs. But, it recognizes that money is tight for the state and local governments, especially now because of COVID-19. Even so, the report stresses the importance of investing in public schools for the state's long-term success.

The text directly addresses the issues raised in the essay topic regarding the demand for transparency and accountability in Connecticut's school funding. It highlights the persistent disparities in spending among districts, despite state aid, emphasizing the critical importance of addressing these discrepancies to ensure fairness in education funding. The findings of this report align with the concerns expressed in the testimonies, particularly the need for a revised funding formula that accurately reflects the state's needs. The report's recommendation for a fairer distribution of state aid based on districts' actual needs resonates with several different approaches advocated for in the testimonies.

The text "Equal Is Not Good Enough: An Analysis of School Funding Equity Across the U.S. and Within Each State," by Ivy Morgan highlights the powerful influence of funding on the grade of education, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds. It emphasizes the ongoing funding discrepancies in the U.S. education system, which deprive millions of students of essential resources. The Education Trust's research reveals substantial funding gaps between

districts serving different demographics, such as students of color and English learners. While some states exhibit progressive funding patterns, many fail to address disparities adequately. The report underlines the significance of equitable access to resources beyond funding, including diverse educators, rigorous coursework, and supportive school settings. It also offers recommendations and resources for policymakers to advance equity in funding systems. Ultimately, achieving school funding equity requires prioritizing the needs of underserved students and implementing transformative policies at the state level.

The text presents an examination of the critical issue of funding disparities in the U.S. education system and the implications for student achievement. The text acknowledges the importance of funding equity, it predominantly focuses on financial inputs and their correlation with student achievement. While funding is undeniably important, a further discussion could explore how resource allocation, rather than just the amount of funding, impacts educational outcomes. Overall, the text effectively highlights the urgency of addressing funding inequities in education, and a more critical analysis could deepen the discussion by considering the broader structural and systemic factors.

The article offers insights into the relentless funding disparities in the U.S. schooling system. By stressing the significant impact of funding on the quality of education, the article underscores the urgency of addressing funding inequities to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. The findings revealing funding gaps between districts serving different demographics resonate with the concerns raised in the testimonies opposing the bill. The article's discussion about the need for transformative policies echoes the proposed solutions advocated in the testimonies. By offering recommendations for policymakers, the article adds to the continuing dialogue on reforming Connecticut's school funding practices to better serve all students.

Racial Segregation and Education Inequity

The text “Segregation and School Funding: How Housing Discrimination Reproduces Unequal Opportunity” By Baker, Di Carlo, and Green III explores the enduring influence of racial and ethnic segregation on school funding disparities in the United States. It underscores how segregation isn't a recent development but has deep historical roots, stemming from deliberate policies that restricted where people of different races could live. This intentional segregation led to significant disparities in neighborhood wealth and, consequently, disparate funding for schools. It emphasizes that because schools rely heavily on local property taxes, the racial and economic composition of neighborhoods directly shapes the resources available to schools. This perpetuates a cycle of inequality, where racially isolated areas with higher poverty levels struggle to provide adequate funding for education compared to wealthier, predominantly white neighborhoods. It examines historical practices like redlining, which continue to influence funding allocation today. By scrutinizing these factors, it sheds light on the systemic nature of educational inequity and the need for comprehensive reforms to address it.

Racial segregation and unequal school funding go hand in hand in the U.S. Past discriminatory practices like redlining still impact schools today, which kept nonwhite communities from getting ahead. But claims say it's not just about race. The text says poverty plays a big role too. It talks about how poor neighborhoods often have underfunded schools, making it harder for kids there to succeed. They touch upon how political practices such as redlining contributed to these issues and themes. The text also talks about how the way schools get money, mainly through local property taxes, isn't fair. This system means that schools in rich areas have more money than those in poor areas. Further, the text also touches on how poverty

affects education. It explains how areas with more poverty tend to have worse schools and how this makes it harder for kids to do well in school. It's like a never-ending cycle of inequality. Overall, it shows how racial segregation and money issues in education are connected, and it makes us think about what needs to change to make things fairer for all students.

The article offers an analysis of factors causing educational inequity, directly relating to the CT HB 05003 and the demand for transparency and accountability in Connecticut's school funding. By examining the historical roots of racial and ethnic segregation and its lasting impact on school funding discrepancies, the article highlights the complex interaction between socioeconomic factors and biased policies. The article highlights the vital topic of how inequities are perpetuated by basing school funding on local property taxes. The discussion on how poverty worsens educational disparities emphasizes the need for reforms addressing systemic inequalities in Connecticut's educational system. By examining the historical injustices faced by marginalized communities, the article underlines the importance of transparency, accountability, and strategic investment in education to break the cycle of inequality in Connecticut's public schools.

The study "Social Construction Is Racial Construction: Examining the Target Populations in School-Choice Policies," by Jabbar, Daramola, Marsh, Enoch-Stevens, Alonso, and Allbright investigates how policy influencers perceive the target populations of school-choice policies across five states in the US. The research uncovers that policymakers often view white families as strong, and racially minoritized families as weak. The study highlights the flexibility of social constructions, with conflicting views of racially minoritized and White parents within the same state context. Despite the prominence of race in social perception, research states that

policymakers primarily use colorblind references. The study underscores the importance of racialized social constructions for equity in school-choice policy.

The study uncovers a racial bias and the fluidity of these social constructions, revealing conflicting views of racially minoritized and White parents in the same state context. This highlights the importance of understanding racialized social constructions for equity in school-choice policy, pointing to implications for policy design and implementation at various levels. This research sheds light on the complex relationship between race, perceptions, and equity, urging for a deeper examination of race dynamics in education policy.

The work offers significant contributions to the discussion of the role of racialized social constructions in shaping education policy. While the study primarily focuses on school-choice policies, its findings have broad implications. The research uncovers a racial bias in how policymakers perceive the target populations of school-choice policies, with White families often viewed as strong and racially minoritized families as weak. This mirrors broader patterns of racial inequality in education funding, where marginalized communities often receive fewer resources and support compared to their White counterparts. Further, the study's emphasis on the importance of understanding racialized social constructs and for policymakers to critically examine how racial biases and perceptions influence funding allocation decisions. By examining the relationship between race, perceptions, and policy outcomes, the study emphasizes the role of racial dynamics, perception, and social justice in Connecticut's schools.

The article "Examining the Narrative: An Analysis of the Racial Discourse Embedded in State Takeover" examines the racial discourse ingrained in policy debates regarding state takeovers of continuously underperforming schools. It highlights how the discussions supporting state takeover often utilize racist narratives. The study employs document analysis and critical

discourse analysis to explore the narratives used by stakeholders for and against state takeover, similar to our analysis of CT HB 05003. The findings reveal that proponents of state takeover often frame their arguments in racial, moral, and economic terms, with a recurring theme of the “white savior” narrative.

By employing document analysis and critical discourse analysis, the study unveils how proponents of state takeover often utilize racist narratives. This sheds light on the impact of inequitable discourse on urban schools and minority communities. The findings reveal that school takeovers disproportionately affect urban settings with a high proportion of low-income students of color, potentially disenfranchising local communities and replacing local black leaders with white state leaders.

This connects to the finding that the strong majority of individuals advocating for funding and attention to neighborhood public schools predominantly come from or teach in Connecticut’s urban towns and cities, aligning with the concerns raised about racialized discourse in education policy. Urban areas often face disproportionate challenges in education funding and resource allocation, leading to disparities in educational outcomes. Similarly, the article highlights how state takeovers of underperforming schools disproportionately affect urban settings with high proportions of low-income students of color. Therefore, the individuals advocating for neighborhood public schools in urban areas are likely motivated by experiences witnessing the impact of systemic inequities in education funding and policy decisions.

By highlighting the racialized narratives that shape public support for educational reforms, the study emphasizes the need for a more complex understanding of these narratives and their implications. In the end, the study encourages policymakers to critically assess the language used in policy discussions surrounding education reform.

The paper "Housing Redlining and Its Lingering Effects on Education Opportunity," by Lindsey Burke and Jude Schwalbach examines the recorded effect of redlining in the 1930s on education opportunities, spotlighting how government intervention in the housing market has long-term effects on schooling. Redlining, a practice that denied loans to certain neighborhoods based on demographic and socioeconomic factors, led to uneven education opportunities since school access is tied to housing and attendance zone boundaries. The article examines the link between housing and schooling, and the lingering effects of redlining on education and proposes policy changes to improve education access, such as eliminating attendance zone boundaries and expanding school choice options. The paper argues for a remedy where districts should stop drawing attendance zone boundaries and states should adopt broad school choice policies

By delving into the historical context of redlining and its influence on housing patterns, the paper explains how injustices continue to perpetuate educational disparities. It calls attention to the close connection between housing and schooling, wherein property values often dictate access to quality education, reinforcing a cycle of inequality. Overall, this text contributes valuable insights into systemic barriers to accessing equitable education.

The insights provided by the text on the impact of redlining on education opportunities hold relevance in connection to our research surrounding the opposition to CT HB 05003. Testimonies opposing CT HB 05003 echoed the history of discrimination and aimed to dismantle deep-rooted structures of inequality by advocating for policy changes that prioritize educational equity and access for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or residential location. Overall, the connection between the historical legacy of redlining and the opposition to CT HB 05003 underscores the importance of addressing systemic barriers to education.

Racial Language in Policy

This article, “Alien Language: Immigration Metaphors and the Jurisprudence of Otherness,” by Keith Cunningham-Parmeter discusses the function of metaphors in shaping the conversations about immigration in the United States. The researcher examines how three dominant metaphors—Immigrants are aliens, Immigration is a flood, and Immigration is an invasion—have influenced the Supreme Court and the public's perception of immigrants.

This article highlights the power of language and rhetoric in shaping attitudes and policies towards racial and ethnic groups. Metaphors serve as powerful tools for shaping discourse, influencing how issues are understood, and addressed by policymakers and the public. By unpacking the assumptions and implications of these metaphors, the author shows ways language can perpetuate biases in the legal system.

The article offers insights into the power of language to influence attitudes and policies towards marginalized groups have an application to this research when addressing educational funding policy disparities.

The article's emphasis on the need to recognize the diverse experiences of aligns with the more general goals of encouraging inclusion. By recognizing the impact of language on shaping policies, the article highlights the importance of critically examining the narratives used in discussions surrounding education funding.

The article "Political Rhetoric and the Marketing of Racial Resentment: 1960s-present," by Judy Foster Davis explores the use of political rhetoric rooted in racial bias in the U.S..It highlights how political marketing tactics can be used to leverage racial resentment to attract supporters and votes.

The discussion of popularizing coded language and negative campaigning tactics highlights the lasting impact of such strategies on modern political campaigning. Overall, the insights provided in this article offer a thorough understanding of the use of racially bias language in political marketing and its implications for future election campaigns. The discussion of how racial resentment has been leveraged in political marketing suggests that racialized narratives continue to influence policy-making processes.

Methods

This study will investigate how public hearing testimonies opposed Connecticut House Bill 05003 (CT HB 05003), which aims to address educational funding disparities in Connecticut's publicly funded schools. By focusing on public hearing testimonies provided on the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) website, this qualitative study, utilizing document analysis, aims to understand how and in what ways stakeholders opposed CT HB 05003. The coding process that took place during this research was done by hand, reviewing all 29 testimonials at least twice. This approach was taken to ensure no themes or rhetoric that are connected to education are missed by unknowing software. Understanding the methods and language used by individuals in opposition to educational funding reforms is essential, and by investigating the language and rhetoric used in oppositional testimonies, this study strives to illuminate the underlying motives, concerns, and perspectives of oppositional testimonies, including educators, community members, and policymakers. Recognizing how people oppose legislation is essential because it provides insights into the concerns, motives, and viewpoints of various stakeholders, including educators, community members, and policymakers (Bo Zhao, 2021). By scrutinizing the language used in oppositional testimonies, researchers can uncover underlying themes and sentiments that may not be immediately apparent; Language can help identify common themes and arguments used by different groups, which can inform future policy debates and decision-making processes (Baker, Di Carlo, and Green III, 2022).

Unit(s) of Analysis

The main unit of analysis for this study will be the 29 public hearing testimonies provided on the CGA website that were categorized as oppositional or uncategorized but

expressed opposition to one or more parts of the bill. A total of 496 testimonies are provided on the website, with 440 categorized as "Supports", 17 categorized as "Opposes", and 39 uncategorized. The 56 testimonies categorized as "Opposes" and uncategorized were reviewed by hand, resulting in 29 testimonies remaining oppositional. These testimonies represent many of the voices engaged in debating the fate of CT HB 05003, including teachers, the Board of Education and other education agency members, local advocates, general community members, and more. Insight from existing literature into historical educational instances where the coded language was utilized in educational initiatives will also be collected to compare with my primary findings.

Data Collection

The procedure for primary data collection proceeded as follows: Navigating to the Connecticut General Assembly website and utilizing the "Bill Info" tab to locate the "Quick Bill Search (by number)" link, one can access the page dedicated to CT HB 05003 by entering the bill's year and number. At the top of the page, several categories of documents are available, including texts from the bill, proposed amendments, fiscal notes and bill analyses, committee actions, and votes. Below, the bill's history is provided, followed by the Co-sponsors for CT HB 05003. At the bottom of the page lies the link for the main unit of analysis: public hearing testimonies. This page contains every public hearing testimony published by the CGA regarding CT HB 05003. All testimonies and other relevant documents, such as the Committee Bill and bill analysis, should be downloaded. An initial categorization of testimonies should be conducted using the identification of supporting, opposing, or uncategorized. The uncategorized testimonies should then be reviewed either manually or through document analysis software to categorize

each as supportive or oppositional. Once the research sample is finalized, in this case, 29 opposing testimonies, the documents should be skimmed, and critical thinking should be employed to create a preliminary code aimed at uncovering recurring themes and language used in the documents. The preliminary code for this research is provided in Appendix A. Preliminary coding revealed several themes and recurring language. Through the review of preliminary data and feedback from the professor and peers, a secondary code was created to focus on collecting the frequency and language used to convey prevailing themes to pull both qualitative and quantitative data. For the secondary coding process, either manually read through or utilize document analysis software to examine the 29 testimonies. The secondary code for this research is provided in Appendix B.

Findings

Overview

The findings of this study highlight an analysis of testimonies of voices, spanning from educators to equity advocates and general residents. Exploring the oppositional testimonies to CT HB 05003, unveiled many concerns surrounding equity and transparency in funding distribution for both neighborhood public schools and charter schools. Further, calls for school choice initiatives compounded with historical references and applied rhetorical strategies emphasize the depth of these concerns. These findings offer a valuable understanding of the various perspectives included in the discourse on education funding. This highlights the need for equitable solutions to address the challenges facing the Connecticut education system.

Transparency and Accountability from CT General Public Schools

Findings show that across different towns and districts, there is a consistent concern about equity in education funding. Many testimonies argue that the current funding formula perpetuates inequities between districts, with high-poverty areas receiving less funding compared to wealthier districts. This disparity is seen as a barrier to providing quality education for all students. This was mentioned by 16 of the 29 testimonies reviewed. This finding goes in hand with major findings, testimonies call for increased transparency and accountability around funding and spending at the general public and charter school levels to increase education equity, which is asked for in 10 out of the sample of 29. Testimonies argue that these schools should be more transparent about how they allocate their funds and should be held accountable for the effectiveness of their spending. For instance, Davis, President of the Hartford Federation of

Paraeducators, highlighted the need for transparency in schools stating, “HB 5003 lacks protections to ensure the increased funding will actually reach classrooms. There are no measures to prohibit districts from padding central office salaries, employing expensive consultants, or splurging on duplicative or unnecessary technology. Accountability and transparency provisions should not be separated from any appropriation, let alone one of this size.” The absence of these measures to prevent districts from redirecting funds towards unnecessary avenues could potentially undermine the intended impact of the bill. Davis underscores the importance of ensuring that taxpayer dollars are utilized efficiently and effectively to support student learning and achievement, an overarching theme among all testimonies.

Transparency and Accountability from Connecticut Charter Schools

Findings also debate charter schools. The issue of charter schools is difficult, with some testimonies advocating for increased transparency and accountability in charter school funding and operations, while others express concerns about their impact on traditional public schools, and some argue for the reallocation of funds away from general public schools and toward school choice initiatives like charter schools or a universal "funding follows the student" amendment.

Opposing testimonials advocating for transparency and accountability from Connecticut's charter schools prevail as one of our major findings with 10 of 29 mentioning it in their testimonies. There are concerns about the shortage of management and accountability in charter school funding and spending, with testimonials calling for increased transparency to ensure that public funds are being used to support all students' learning. Equity advocate Luna states, "This

bill raises real questions for me, especially in regard to the inclusion of charter schools alongside public schools. Charter schools are not held to the same accountability standards as public schools, so public funding for charter schools may not guarantee that the funds will be used effectively or for the benefit of all students. This is especially worrisome because charter schools do not serve all students, including those with special needs, and their admission policies result in selective student populations. There is limited oversight and transparency in how charter schools are managed and how they spend public funds, which can result in financial mismanagement and abuse of public resources." These different standards and lack of supervision can lead to the misuse of public funds. Public funds should be used effectively to support student learning and achievement, not anything else.

Funding General Public Schools

Those who express concern for the way that charter schools redirect funds away from general public schools; Cecaelli, former Board of Education representative in North Haven, said "Please continue to fully fund our public schools and oppose any initiatives that threaten to divert critical funds away from local communities." An instance of this is cited by Brown, Chair of Bridgeport Board of Education, who cites that "In the last decade alone, the Bridgeport Board of Education has had to make more than \$50 million in cuts including direct support in our already overcrowded classrooms." Since charter schools receive funding from the overall same fiscal budget as general public schools, every dollar advocated toward charter schools takes away from vulnerable public schools like Bridgeport exacerbating issues such as overcrowded classrooms and limited support. By redirecting funds from general public schools, charter schools create financial strain on local communities and public school systems.

Funding Follow the Student

Conversely, 9 of the 29 testimonies explicitly asked for a new funding formula where funding per student would simply follow students to whatever school they choose to attend instead; 14 of the 29 sampled testimonies opposed the complex formula that is currently written. Connecticut resident and President of Connecticut's Chapter of U.S. Parents Involved in Education Manusky simply puts it "Money should follow the child so that parents can independently decide what is the best school for their child." Echoed by community member and Clinical Psychologist Seltzer, she states, "As in the education reform sweeping across the country, the money should follow the child. Every parent deserves to right to have their tax dollars go towards any school of their choice. That is the gold standard for educational choice." The push for a new funding formula where funding per student follows the student to their chosen school reflects a desire for greater autonomy and choice in education. By emphasizing the principle of money following the child, advocates seek to encourage a more flexible approach that prioritizes individual student needs, conflicting with the views of those who advocate for funding to be primarily directed at general public schools.

Rhetorical Strategies

Finally, there were 9 applications of positive rhetorical strategies presented in the 29 sampled testimonies. The use of rhetorical strategies in the testimonies reflects the participants' efforts to persuade, inform, and engage with policymakers. Positive rhetoric highlights the significance of fully funding schools and investing in vulnerable students, Some participants

utilize positive rhetoric to acknowledge and praise actions taken by policymakers. For example, equity advocate Henderson states, "We have a historic opportunity...fully fund our public schools to guarantee quality education for ALL students." Henderson emphasizes the opportunity to sufficiently public school funding, framing it as a positive step forward. By using words like "opportunity" and "valuable," they highlight the potential benefits of increased funding, such as improved educational outcomes and opportunities for students.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive analysis of the different perspectives expressed in testimonies opposing CT HB 05003. Through the voices of educators, equity advocates, community members, and more, it becomes evident that concerns regarding equity and transparency in education funding distribution are vital. Across different towns and districts, there is a consistent call for reform to address the systemic inequities perpetuated by the current funding formula. Transparency and accountability appear as crucial themes, with testimonies advocating for increased oversight of both general public and charter schools' funding and spending. The debate around charter schools underscores the need for greater transparency and equity in their operations. Additionally, there is a significant push for a new funding formula where funding per student follows the student to their chosen school. Rhetorical strategies are employed throughout the testimonies to persuade policymakers, emphasizing the need for equitable solutions to Connecticut's education problems, to ensure that all students have access to quality education.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the ongoing challenges of educational funding disparities in Connecticut, particularly in the context of segregated housing patterns and their impact on public school funding. This discussion section will connect the findings to relevant literature, including Eaton (2020), Zhao and Chiumenti (2021), Baker, Di Carlo, and Green III (2022), Morgan (2022), Cunningham-Parmeter (2022), Jabbar et al. (2022), Welsh et al. (2019), Davis (2023), and Burke and Schwalbach (2021), attributing significance to our research.

Transparency and Accountability in Education Funding:

The persistent concern among testimonies regarding equity in education funding aligns with Eaton's (2020) examination of separate and unequal housing patterns in Hartford, Connecticut perpetuating inequalities. Eaton traces the historical origins of housing segregation and its lasting impact on public school funding disparities, highlighting the interconnectedness of housing policies and educational opportunities. Similarly, Baker, Di Carlo, and Green III (2022) highlight how housing discrimination perpetuates unequal opportunity in education, underscoring the need for comprehensive reforms to address the root causes of segregation and funding disparities. The findings of this study complement Eaton's analysis by shedding light on the implications of socioeconomically charged barriers to equitable education funding. These findings further resonate with Zhao and Chiumenti's (2021) research on designing equitable state education aid formulas, emphasizing the importance of transparent and accountable funding mechanisms when addressing educational disparity. By addressing the history of housing discrimination and BS research on aid formulas, policymakers can dismantle the obstacles that continue educational inequities.

The Debate Surrounding Charter Schools

The results of this investigation reflect a discussion about the role of charter schools in education reform, echoing Jabbar et al.'s (2022) examination of school-choice policies and their impact on target populations. The testimonies advocating for increased transparency and accountability in charter school funding echo Jabbar et al.'s critique of how school-choice policies can heighten inequalities by disproportionately helping specific student populations. Additionally, the problems raised about the influence of charter schools on traditional public schools align with Welsh et al.'s (2019) breakdown of the racial discourse. The controversy surrounding charter schools emphasizes the need for comprehensive policies that address concerns related to transparency, accountability, and equity in education funding.

Advocacy for Funding Follows the Student

A substantial amount of the testimonies in this analysis support a new funding formula where funding per student follows the student to their selected school, alluding to a broader movement towards school choice initiatives. This finding resonates with Morgan's (2022) research on school funding equity across the US. By examining disparities in funding allocation, Morgan highlights the ingrained injustices embedded within traditional budget formulas that fail to account for variations in student needs, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational contexts.

Use of Rhetorical Strategies

The results of this breakdown stress the strategic use of rhetorical strategies within public hearing testimonies. Rhetoric serves as a powerful tool for persuading, allowing speakers to

articulate issues in ways that resonate with their intended audience. The use of rhetorical strategies aligns with Davis's (2023) examination of political rhetoric, which emphasizes how language can be utilized to elicit specific emotions toward policy proposals. Policymakers must be attentive to the language used in public discourse and consider the underlying objectives of stakeholders when evaluating policy proposals.

Conclusion

This discussion offers a comprehensive analysis of the opposition to CT HB 05003, providing valuable insights into the concerns and perspectives of testimonies. By connecting the results to existing literature and extending applicable theories, this research contributes to our conversation about education funding disparities and reform efforts. The focus on transparency, accountability, and equity in education funding policies has noteworthy implications for policymakers, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic inequities to ensure all students have access to quality education.

Recommendations for Policy

Based on the conclusions of this study, several policy recommendations can be made. First, policymakers should prioritize efforts to increase clarity and responsibility in education funding, both for general public schools and charter schools. This may include periodic audits, public reporting of financial data, and straightforward procedures for fund allocation. Second, there is a need for a new, clear funding formula that guarantees equitable distribution of funds across communities, and it must take into account the variations of student needs and socioeconomic backgrounds. This will involve modifying the existing funding formulas to reprioritize districts with higher levels of need. Thirdly, while endorsing for transparency and accountability in charter school operations, policymakers should also consider initiatives that promote school choice, such as funding-follows-the-student models. These initiatives have to be implemented in a way that does not amplify existing inequities or divert resources away from vulnerable public schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study delivers a complete analysis of the opposition to Connecticut House Bill 05003 by analyzing public hearing testimonies. Through qualitative document analysis, the breakdown uncovered a host of problems and viewpoints regarding equity, transparency, and accountability in school funding. The findings highlight the pressing need for policymakers to manage systemic disparities and advocate for approaches that ensure all students have access to a high-quality education. One important finding is the concern expressed across testimonies regarding equity in education funding. Many testimonies highlighted the existing disparities between districts, with high-poverty areas receiving less funding compared to wealthier districts. This finding aligns with existing publications on the use of separate and unequal housing patterns, emphasizing the interconnectedness of housing policies and educational opportunities (Baker et al., 2022). Further, the debate surrounding charter schools occurred as a controversial issue, with testimonies advocating for improved transparency and accountability in charter school funding and operations. The study reflects previous research on school-choice policies, stressing the need for comprehensive policies that handle concerns connected to transparency, accountability, and equity (Zhao, 2021). Additionally, there was a notable push for a new funding formula where money follows the students to their chosen schools (Jabbar et al., 2022). This reflects a broader movement towards school choice initiatives and highlights the importance of funding mechanisms that prioritize student needs and preferences.

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Appendix

Appendix A.

Preliminary Codebook

Role of Respondent	Town Rep	Testimonies provided by elected officials or representatives of municipalities.
	Local Advocate	Testimonies provided by individuals or groups advocating for educational funding reform at the local level.
	Education Professional	Testimonies provided by individuals identified to be education professionals (teachers, paraprofessionals, administrative support, etc.)
	Community Member	Testimonies provided by members of the community who may be directly impacted by educational funding decisions.
Themes	Equity	Testimonies discussing the need for fair and equitable distribution of educational funding across communities.
	Local Control	Testimonies emphasizing the importance of local autonomy and decision-making in educational matters.
	Taxation	Testimonies addressing concerns about the impact of tax redistribution or increases on residents.
	Resource Allocation	Testimonies discussing the allocation of resources and funding priorities within the education system.
	Impact-Students	Testimonies highlighting the potential impact of the bill on students and educational outcomes.

	Impact-Teachers	Testimonies highlighting the potential impact of the bill on teachers, educational professionals in schools, and their ability to perform their job.
	Political	Testimonies reflecting broader political beliefs or ideologies that may influence support or opposition to the bill.
	Historical	Testimonies referencing historical factors or precedents related to educational funding in Connecticut.
	Admin Challenges	Testimonies discussing logistical or administrative challenges associated with implementing the proposed funding redistribution.
	Alternatives	Testimonies proposing alternative approaches or solutions to address educational funding disparities.
Language Analysis	Rhet- Positive	Testimonies employing positive language or rhetoric in support of the bill.
	Rhet- Negative	Testimonies employing negative language or rhetoric in opposition to the bill.
	Rhet- Neutral	Testimonies using neutral language or rhetoric that does not strongly express support or opposition.
Impact of Bill	Beneficiaries	Testimonies identifying specific communities or groups that would directly benefit from the bill.
	Adverse Effect	Testimonies identifying potential adverse effects or unintended consequences of the bill's implementation.

	Imp- Short-term	Testimonies discussing the short-term (1-2 years) implications of the bill for educational equity and quality in Connecticut.
	Imp- Long-term	Testimonies discussing the long-term (3-10 years) implications of the bill for educational equity and quality in Connecticut.

Appendix B.

Secondary Codebook

Code:	Meaning:	Explanation:
TRANSP	Transparency	Testimonies explicitly calling for transparency in educational funding processes advocate for clear and open communication about how funds are allocated and spent. This transparency ensures accountability and helps stakeholders understand how resources are distributed within the education system.
FULL_FUND	“Fully Fund”	Testimonies advocating to “fully fund” some type of education initiative, emphasizing the importance of providing adequate financial support to educational initiatives. This includes ensuring that all necessary resources, such as staffing, materials, and facilities, are sufficiently funded to meet the needs of students and educators.

VULN_STUD	“Vulnerable Students”	Mentions of vulnerable students refer to those who face challenges or disadvantages in the education system. This code highlights testimonies that emphasize the need for targeted support and resources to address the unique needs of these students and ensure their academic success.
OPP_TO_BETTER	Opportunity to Do Better	Some testimonies call CT HB 05003 an opportunity to do better in education indicating the current disapproval of education funding. This code highlights testimonies that despite opposition do so in a positive light and often recommend ways to <i>do better</i> .
CALL_REAL_EQ	Calls for Real Equity	Testimonies categorized under this code call for “real equity”.
DEF_REAL_EQ	Defines Real Equity	Testimonies categorized under this code define what they mean when they ask for “real equity”.
VOUCH_GRANTS	Vouchers, Grants, etc.	Mentions of vouchers, grants, or other funding mechanisms used to support educational initiatives are captured under this code. These testimonies discuss the advantages or disadvantages of such funding methods.
CHART_POS	Charter Schools Positive	Positive references to charter schools, including their benefits and successes, are coded under this category. Testimonies

		highlight the advantages of charter schools in providing innovative educational options and meeting the diverse needs of students.
CHART_NEG	Charter Schools Negative	Negative references to charter schools, including criticisms or concerns about their effectiveness or impact, are categorized under this code. These testimonies raise questions about the accountability, equity, or transparency of charter school operations.
OTH_CHOICE	Other School Choice	Mentions of alternative educational options beyond traditional public schools, such as private schools or homeschooling, are captured under this code.
GHOST_STUD	Ghost Students/Double Funding	Testimonies discussing "ghost students" or the part of the bill that where schools receive funding for students who do not actually attend are coded under this category. These testimonies raise concerns about the integrity and equity of the funding formula and funding data in the education system.
CT_WEALTH	CT Wealth	References to Connecticut's wealth or education funding budget are captured under this code. Testimonies cite the amount or the sheer capacity of Connecticut's current public school budget.

STOP_NPS_FUND	Stop Funding Neighborhood Public Schools	Calls to stop or reduce funding for traditional public schools (NPSs) due to perceived inefficiencies or shortcomings are categorized under this code. These testimonies advocate for alternative approaches to education funding or question the effectiveness of traditional public school systems.
FUND_NPS	Fund Neighborhood Public Schools	Advocacy for increased funding and support for traditional public schools (NPSs) to improve educational quality and accessibility falls under this code. These testimonies highlight the importance of not letting schools fail by investing in public education through avenues that promote equity and opportunity for all students.
RACISM_EXCL	Racism/Exclusivity	Discussions about systemic racism or exclusivity in educational policies or practices are coded under this category. These testimonies raise concerns about discriminatory practices or barriers to access and advocate for greater inclusivity and diversity in education
CRIT_FORMULA	Criticize Formula	Criticisms or concerns regarding the formula used to allocate educational funding are captured under this code. These testimonies question the integrity of the funding formula and call for reforms

		to ensure more equitable distribution of resources
POLITICAL	Political	References to political influences or considerations in educational policymaking or funding decisions are coded under this category. These testimonies may discuss the role of political actors, parties, or ideologies in shaping education policy and funding priorities.
FUND_FOLLOW_STUD	Funding Follow the Student	Testimonies advocating for funding models where resources are allocated based on the needs and enrollment of individual students, rather than school districts, is captured under this code. These testimonies call for education funding on a per-capita basis where funding is allocated to wherever that student attends regardless of if they choose to attend their NPS or any school choice option.

Appendix C

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/TOB/H/PDF/2023HB-05003-R01-HB.PDF>