

Students Matter

Defending students' rights through impact litigation

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Students Matter Statement on Court's Decision in *CCJEF v. Rell*

HARTFORD, Conn. — Today, Hartford Superior Court Judge Thomas Moukawsher issued a decision in *Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) v. Rell*, finding the the state's formula for distributing education aid is irrational and unconstitutional. In a sweeping opinion, read from the bench in its entirety by Judge Moukawsher, the Court ordered the state to craft and adopt rational remedies on the following subjects:

- The relationship between state and local government in education;
- An education aid formula;
- A definition of elementary and secondary education;
- Standards for hiring, firing, evaluating, and paying education professionals;
- Funding, identification, and educational services standards for special education.

The state has 180 days to submit proposed remedies. Once the state has submitted its proposed remedies, the plaintiffs will have 60 days to comment and propose alternatives.

Students Matter, the national nonprofit organization sponsoring the Connecticut federal education equality lawsuit [Martinez v. Malloy](#), issued the following statement in response to the Court's ruling in *CCJEF v. Rell*:

"Students Matter applauds the Court's decision in *CCJEF v. Rell*, an important case challenging the adequacy and equity of Connecticut's school funding system under the state constitution. While the court recognized that equitable funding for Connecticut's public schools is an important step toward ensuring every child has an opportunity to learn and succeed, it's critical to note the Court's acknowledgement that a multitude of other factors beyond funding must also be addressed to ensure that all students have access the educational opportunity promised by the state's constitution.

"Today's well-reasoned decision was an indictment of Connecticut's education system. The decision recognizes that the state of Connecticut is 'defaulting on its constitutional duty' to provide equal educational opportunity to all students, not just through the state's inequitable funding formula, but also through a failure to account for other factors that impact education equity, such as the standards for hiring, firing, and evaluating educators, and the failure of the state to appropriately prepare all students for success in college and life.

"The Court's condemnation of widespread inequity in Connecticut's education system, and it's call to look at remedies outside of funding, underscores the importance of Students Matter's federal education equality lawsuit, *Martinez v. Malloy*. The anti-opportunity laws challenged by *Martinez v. Malloy* are also hurting children across Connecticut, erecting unnecessary and

burdensome red tape that restricts students' access to the quality public schools that we know are possible, in violation of the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the U.S. Constitution.

"We congratulate the *CCJEF* plaintiffs on today's remarkable victory, and reiterate our support for the *Martinez v. Malloy* student and parent plaintiffs in their fight to have harmful bureaucratic restrictions struck down, and ultimately ensure all children have access to a quality education."

On August 23, 2016, a group of Connecticut students and parents filed *Martinez v. Malloy*, a federal lawsuit against the State of Connecticut challenging a set of state anti-opportunity laws and policies that restrict access to quality public school options, in U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut with the support of Students Matter.

Throughout Connecticut and across the country, many public schools — including magnet, traditional and charter public schools — are delivering a world-class education to students of all backgrounds. Unfortunately, the State of Connecticut has passed and continues to enforce state laws and policies that essentially shut the doors to these quality public school options, contributing to one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation and denying the state's most vulnerable students access to the equal opportunity they deserve.

To learn more about *Martinez v. Malloy*, please visit studentsmatter.org/martinez/press-kit.

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Students Matter is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to sponsoring impact litigation to promote access to quality public education. Learn more at studentsmatter.org.