

Appropriations Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Governors Proposed FY 21 Budget Adjustments and why it is critical to maintain the current State funding for the American School for the Deaf (ASD). This funding has historically enhanced ASD's effective programming, serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing student population across CT and it is imperative the funding remain in order to continue that success.

ASD has been a source of support, education and hope, not only for my child, but also for my family since our arrival in 2015. The journey to get to ASD was paved with public educational failure and emotional turmoil. However, with the support of ASD's highly trained and skilled staff, their rich history in the development Deaf education, our son and our family feel that the future is looking bright. My child is well cared for educationally and emotionally. There are times when my husband and I feel that ASD has been the foster care educational system to our child. Before entering the ASD program, our family's confidence and trust with educators was so badly damaged, we were hesitant that this approach to learning wasn't going to have any significant impact. We quickly realized that the interventions we received not only allowed our child to become well adjusted academically and emotional, but our whole family as well. As we speak, our son is working with his team to go above and beyond the standard educational check boxes! We value and credit the work that ASD does to encourage and support self-empowerment, not only with our child, but other students as well.

As a parent, I have become actively involved with ASD. I have experienced firsthand how ASD unequivocally gives back to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community as well as the State of CT with knowledge and resources. Connecticut has shared the history of supporting the Deaf/HH community through ASD. Programs and resources offered at ASD are not only helping my son, but hundreds of other CT students, families across the state and to state employees themselves. If we continue to cut support to this education program, then we cut the necessary support to the children, families and professionals they serve. We will be cutting the necessary staff to ensure that these children are getting a dominate role to enrichment programs that our children would not be afforded equally in a mainstream environment. For example, ASD has a robotic team. They compete statewide with mainstream and private schools. I have served as a Judge and could tell you that the ASD team is an equal contender in this competition. Not only that – Our ASD students have been noted throughout the competition, that they exemplify the meaning of gracious professionalism, a FIRST Robotics philosophy, a philosophy that we all should be aspiring too. The robotics program is rigorous and demanding for all students and the coach. It is probably the most favored class among students. It is these types of programs that tend to see the harsh realities when funding support gets taken away.

Please consider who is at the other side of the number when you are adjusting your budgets. You may be cutting the next CEO to a CT Wind Farm, Chief engineer to Electric Boat, or a Head Chef to a 5 Star restaurant.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

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