

February 13, 2020

Written Testimony Submission

RE: Elementary and Secondary Budgets

Dear Members of the Connecticut Legislature's Appropriations' Committee:

I write to you as a lifelong resident of Connecticut and a parent of three children enrolled in the New Haven Public School System; we have been at NHPS schools since 2013. While I am unable to testify in person today, I hope that my letter will serve to fully express my deep concerns with the current underfunding of public education, both in our current state budget as well as in the projected budget recently put forth by Governor Lamont.

ALL of the children in this state deserve high quality education. Current studies have shown that Connecticut's schools are dramatically underfunded, and this is especially apparent in our urban schools, which have long dealt with a disparity in funding and support, compared to wealthier suburban schools in the state. As a supporter of the New Haven Public Schools Advocates group, I would like to re-iterate the points made in their letter and testimony to your committee: "Current education funding fails to calculate actual costs given rates and concentration of poverty, concentration of English learners, rates of incidence of special education and other relevant factors. The cost study completed by The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding in 2005 and updated in 2014 shows that our public schools are under-funded (in 2014 dollars) by at least \$1.2 billion ... An increase of just 1.5%, below the level of inflation, essentially sentences New Haven to continued deficit and inability to meet students' holistic needs. We turn to the legislature to right this wrong and approve a budget that reflects our needs and values."

My children attend Elm City Montessori School, a public magnet charter school in New Haven. A relatively new school, it was founded six years ago and now teaches grades PreK-3 to 5th grade. Each year, our school expands and adds a new grade – we ultimately plan to be a PreK-3 to 8th grade school. The opportunity to have a public Montessori school in an urban setting has been transformative for so many of the students, making available a model of education often denied to public school attendees in this country. Our school serves a wide range of children, hailing from a diverse array of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Elm City Montessori School has a firm commitment to Anti-Bias and Anti-Racism work, which is reflected in the social justice education and actions incorporated into the curriculum and community as a whole. Properly and fully funding the educational budget will allow our school, and all of the wonderful schools across the city of New Haven, to grow, flourish and fully serve the needs of all our students.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion in regards to the proposed education budget. I hope necessary steps and votes will be taken to ensure that public education in New Haven is fully funded, as our children deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Kerry Brown

New Haven resident/parent of three NHPS students