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ep. Lemar, Roland; Senator Looney; Rep. Walker, Toni; Sen. Winfield, Gary

**Subject:** Fair Funding for NHPS

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa, Representative Horn, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee:

We write on behalf of the New Haven Public School Advocates, a grassroots network of families, educators, and community members working to improve our public schools. We are gravely concerned with the proposed budget for public education, given that it perpetuates the continued underfunding of public education and its profound impacts on our state's social, cultural, and economic future. At 1.5%, the proposed increase does not even cover the rate of inflation.

When I was in high school, I was a pianist in the school jazz ensemble. Growing up in Kansas City, jazz was extremely important to not only my school, but the culture and history of our city as a whole — yet our ensemble constantly struggled to stay afloat. For years, Kansas public schools existed in a constant state of crisis. The state administration failed to provide adequate funding to public schools; in fact, our schools nearly shut down in 2016 due to severe shortages in funding. This was devastating. And the performing arts were among the first programs to be directly impacted by budget cuts.

Connecticut should *never* stand for this. The funding crisis I witnessed in high school should *never* occur in *any* state, city, or school district. But 1.5% is simply not enough to protect New Haven schools from such a crisis.

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 factors. An increase of just 1.5 percent, not even keeping up with 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.

The legislature can also consider the following recommendations:

- Permit Alliance funds to be used for a broader subset of educational programs, since Alliance isn't really "extra" when ECS is fundamentally inadequate.
- Fund charter school special education programs directly, thus removing this under-funded mandate imposed on school districts.
- Revert to a higher threshold for excess cost reimbursement. Lowering the threshold has decreased reimbursement, while already-high costs continue to rise.
- Eliminate free busing for private and charter schools.
- Provide expanded funding for extended school hours programming, early childhood, vocational and technical programs, mental/behavioral health, nursing, Family Resource Centers, and training in anti-racism/anti-bias + non-punishment-based disciplinary practices.

We know that funds are made available for the things that we collectively value. These changes would help bring us closer to meeting the urgent needs of children, families, and educators in our classrooms, and creating the future that we all want for our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. You may reach us at [nhpsadvocates@gmail.com](mailto:nhpsadvocates@gmail.com) with questions.

Writing on behalf of the network:

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Sincerely,

Iman Jaroudi

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Iman Jaroudi

Yale University, Class of 2022

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