

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

I am a resident of North Haven, a volunteer with New Haven Public School Advocates, and co-chair of the New Haven Public Schools Deficit Mitigation Committee. I am writing to express my concern about the proposed budget for public education, which I believe represents a serious underfunding of education in our state -- most particularly for our urban school districts.

Current education funding fails to take into account the actual costs of properly educating our students, due to the legislature's adoption of a funding formula based on student weights rather than actual service costs. For example, the weights assigned to students with ELL or special education needs are not based in research of actual costs and provide only minor additions to the base rate (1.2x or 1.3x). They do not consider, for example, that the actual cost to districts of special education outplacement might in fact be many times the base rate -- perhaps 12x or 13x! A close focus on funding equity, to the neglect of universal funding adequacy, has been a narrow vision that has left our urban districts in severe deficits and our urban students deprived of services and resources more reliably available to their suburban peers.

A cost study conducted in 2014 by The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding shows that our public schools are under-funded by at least \$1.2 billion. The Connecticut Supreme Court's *CCJEF v. Rell* decision ceded to the legislature the authority to determine the level of funding sufficient to give the students of Connecticut the education they need. Therefore it seems important to update this study or conduct a new one.

In addition to sponsoring a cost study and allocating a funding increase to our urban districts of *at least* the rate of inflation, the legislature can also consider the following steps:

- Permit Alliance funds to be used for a broader set of educational programs.
- 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.

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. Please send any questions to [jkelly@fastmail.com](mailto:jkelly@fastmail.com).

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