



ep. Lemar, Roland; Sen. Winfield, Gary; Rep. Dillon, Patricia; Senator Looney; Rep.

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa, Representative Horn, and 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.

Growing up in a rural area, I constantly saw how poor funding led to lower educational opportunities for students. While I managed to find alternative ways of getting a good education, so many of my friends and peers who were smart and wanted to work hard were unable to get a good education, and have continued to struggle after high school. With more funding, my school district could have recruited better teachers and had more after school extracurriculars and innovative school functions. Fixing public school issues will take time and many complex solutions, but increasing funding is always a good start.

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. 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. The Connecticut Supreme Court's 2018 *CCJEF vs. Rell* decision called for "an honest formula that delivers state aid according to local need," while yielding to the legislature's decision-making authority to determine sufficiency. 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 with questions.

Writing on behalf of the network:

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Sincerely,
Emmett Shell