

Walker, Toni; Sen. Winfield, Gary

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

I am writing in my personal capacity as both a New Haven and Connecticut taxpayer. I also happen to be an alder in New Haven, and so in a few months will have the challenging responsibility to vote on the budget for the city. That role makes me appreciate the hard decisions you have to make regarding spending. It also gives me an understanding of how much New Haven depends on state funding, if it is going to be able to adequately fund its school system, and address the critical needs of our kids, teachers, and parents, which are so important to the future of our communities and our state.

I am very concerned with the proposed state budget for public education, which continues to underfund public education. It does not calculate actual costs given rates and concentration of poverty, concentration of English learners, rates of incidence of special education, and other important factors. The Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding in 2005, and updated in 2014, showed that our public schools are under-funded (in 2014 dollars) by at least \$1.2 billion. This year's increase of just 1.5% does not even keep up with inflation and makes it impossible to meet student needs.

With less than one-half on New Haven's property being taxable, and significant amounts of our spending being committed to debt service, pension, and health care costs, we unfortunately have limited capacity to devote more city funding to education, and need the state to come up with a way to better allocate education dollars.

I very much hope the legislature also will consider the following steps to help address the situation:

- Permit Alliance funds to be used for a broader subset of educational programs.
- Fund charter school special education programs directly, thus removing this under-funded mandate imposed on school districts.
- Eliminate free busing for private schools.
- Provide expanded funding for needs such as extended school hours programming, early childhood, vocational and technical programs, mental/behavioral health, and nursing,

Again, I recognize that you have to make hard funding decisions, but very much appreciate your seriously considering this request, because these changes would help New Haven provide for the critical educational needs of our children, families, and educators.

Sincerely, Abigail Roth (New Haven)