

To: Chairs Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Miner and France, and Members of the Appropriations Committee
From: Paul Freeman, Superintendent
Guilford Public Schools
President, CAPSS

March 9, 2021

My name is Paul Freeman; I am the Superintendent of Guilford Public Schools, and I serve this year as President of CAPSS. I write today **in opposition to Governor's Biennial Budget proposal, House Bill 6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor.**

This past year has been unlike any other in American, or Connecticut, Education, the effects of which will reverberate for years to come. And while I recognize that this pandemic has impacted more than just the educational arena, for which I am responsible for advocating, I must observe that the proposal to flat fund ECS will effectively reduce school funding at the worst possible time and will most severely impact our most vulnerable children and our most needy districts.

The CAPSS Blueprint to Transform CT's Public Schools, however, charts a path forward for responsible and continued investment in public education. It provides a well-thought-out plan across 15 years, growing the ECS foundation by 2.5% annually and targeting no towns for a reduction in funds. The CAPSS Blueprint would have the state make necessary investments in education, over time, while it streamlines both application and accountability processes related to grant funding so that districts can focus on teaching and learning.

The level funding of the State Department of Education budget will mean that the current level of staffing, less than it was a decade ago, will continue, hobbling the department's ability to lead state schools out of this pandemic. School districts now, more than ever, will need the support of a robust department, particularly in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The coming years will be a time of rebuilding, and the State Department of Education will need to support districts through unprecedented partnerships. Now is a time to invest in the Department, and the CAPSS Blueprint details the many ways in which that investment can be targeted to benefitting schools and children.

Temporary and limited assistance from the federal government will not be enough to lead Connecticut School districts out of this pandemic. This is the time for thoughtful, long-range planning and continued state-level investment in public schools. I cannot support the Governor's Biennial Budget as proposed, but I encourage you to consider the CAPSS Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools and the 30 specific recommendations contained therein.