

March 8, 2021

Re: Governor's Proposed FY 2022-2023 Budget for Elementary and Secondary Education Agencies

Dear Honorable Co-Chairs Osten and Walker and Honorable Vice-Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan:

My name is Nizajet Gjuraj, I'm a resident of Norwalk and I'm writing to express my concerns about freezing Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding for two years, which is in the Governor's proposed budget.

About 75% of Norwalk Public School (NPS) students are students of color, and over 60% of NPS students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Additionally, 17% of NPS students are English Language Learners. The pandemic / COVID-19 has added additional strains on our communities, especially for our families of color. A freeze in ECS funding will likewise disproportionately affect children and families of color in Norwalk.

By freezing the Education Cost Sharing grant at FY 2020-21 levels, NPS will not receive the increases promised in the 2017 law when the formula was redesigned. Therefore, NPS will not receive \$419,624 in FY 2021-22, and \$908,600 in FY 2022-23, for a total loss of \$1,328,224 in state funding through the biennial budget.

ECS funding is vital for our students. Freezing ECS funding delays money that was promised to our students over 10 years, and it will delay advances on equitable outcomes by underfunding our students for an additional two years. The current proposal means a child would be able to go through their entire school tenure without ever benefiting from the full funding they should be entitled to.

This proposal is detrimental to our students. We urge you to let the ECS phase-in to proceed as planned and promised. Now more than ever, our students need commitments from our state government that federal funding should be used to supplement COVID-19 recovery and learning loss recovery, not supplant normal operating expenses.

I strongly urge you to reconsider freezing ECS funding.

Sincerely,

*Nizajet Gjuraj*