

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Phil Kent and I'm from Hamden, CT, which is an Alliance District. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to H.B. 6439 and its pause of the ECS formula.

Over the last 12 months, we have watched our educators, parents, and students navigate distance and hybrid learning during the global COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen the struggles they face, struggles that have only exacerbated the inequities within Connecticut's public school system. We know how difficult it has been for districts that do not have adequate resources to educate their students amid a pandemic, and we know that equitably funding our districts is critical to the success of our students and communities, now more than ever.

Pausing the ECS phase-in for two years will do a great disservice to our students, particularly those who have additional learning needs. While districts that have a small population of high-need students might be able to survive the phase-in pause, districts with a large population of students with greater learning needs will suffer.

I'm particularly concerned about our Alliance Districts, which are our 33 lowest-performing school districts. My oldest son went through this public school system and my two younger sons are there now in an Alliance District. I am concerned that overall my sons have not been getting the rigorous education they should compared to more affluent districts and that while they get good grades they may still fare worse after graduation than their peers. This proposed budget will result in a \$103 million loss for Alliance Districts, and instead result in a \$8.6 million increase for non-Alliance Districts.

Moreover, over the last 12 months, we have watched our educators, parents, and students navigate distance and hybrid learning during the global COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen the struggles they face, struggles that have only exacerbated the inequities within Connecticut's public school system. We know how difficult it has been for districts that do not have adequate resources to educate their students amid a pandemic, and we know that equitably funding our districts is critical to the success of our students and communities, now more than ever.

Pausing the ECS phase-in for two years will do a great disservice to our students, particularly those who have additional learning needs. While districts that have a small population of high-need students might be able to survive the phase-in pause, districts with a large population of students with greater learning needs will suffer.

It's no secret that Connecticut's public schools are deeply racially and economically segregated. There is a \$639 million funding gap between Connecticut districts that serve student populations that are majority white versus those that serve a majority Black and brown population. Thus, pausing the phase-in only serves to worsen the racial disparity in school funding.

Sincerely,

Phil Kent