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Good afternoon, Chairwoman of the Committee, Rep. Walker, Sen. Osten, Ranking Members, Rep. France and Sen. Miner and members of the Appropriations Committee: thank you for the opportunity to speak against the Governor's proposed budget.

My name is Daniel Pearson and I am the State Director for Educators for Excellence-Connecticut, a teacher-led organization with nearly 1,000 members statewide that seeks to elevate teacher voice in policy decisions.

Today I submit testimony on behalf of our members who are current classroom teachers and who work everyday to ensure that their students have the best educational experience possible. These teachers work with the very students affected by these policies and they urge you to reject the Governor's proposed budget using federal funds to supplant our state funds for education and pausing the ECS phase in.

School funding is at the heart of many pressing issues that plague our teachers and students, particularly our students of highest need. As teachers know all too well, each year that a student falls behind, the chances that they catch up decreases exponentially. That's why we must treat this issue with the urgency it deserves.

All students deserve the chance to succeed no matter their circumstances, and right now, that chance is only afforded to a few of our state's children who are overwhelmingly white, affluent children. And while we continue to underfund schools, our teachers are provided with fewer and fewer resources to effectively teach our students of highest need.

The current phase-in approach the state is taking with education funding is leaving a generation of students behind and telling those students that they are not worthy of our investment. We cannot make up for this lost time in the future. The impact is happening now and the time for long term investment from our state is now.

On top of everything, the consequences of COVID-19 are rippling through our communities further exacerbating the inequities in our education system. Although cities have or will receive money from the federal government, the funding inequities in Connecticut are structural and any progress made by federal dollars will be short term and not sustainable.

We must use the federal funds for its intended purposes and address the learning loss from COVID and start to build out the infrastructure to address the structural inequities in our education system. However, without adequate state funding our districts will hit a fiscal cliff in 2023 and any progress made will be gone. That is why it is vital that we not only reject the Governor's budget to use federal dollars to fill existing holes in our system, but this past Wednesday testified in front of the Education about equitable funding. We suggest when the committee begins constructing a budget that it look at SB 948 so our schools and students can finally get the necessary investment they need to have a high quality education.

To close the opportunity gap, we need to improve our education funding system now, this legislative session, and that starts with rejecting the Governor's budget proposal and funding all schools equitably. Without these changes, we are doing a tremendous disservice for our most vulnerable students and the teachers that serve them with unwavering commitment.

Thank you for your consideration and thank you for your time,

Daniel Pearson

#### About E4E

Founded by public school teachers, Educators for Excellence is a growing movement of more than 33,000 educators nationwide, united around a common set of values and principles for improving student learning and elevating the teaching profession. We work together to identify issues that impact our schools, create solutions to these challenges, and advocate for policies and programs that give all students access to a quality education.

For more information, please visit [www.e4e.org](http://www.e4e.org).