

I am writing you on behalf of my family and community to raise my concerns about freezing Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding.

I stand with the City of Norwalk, the Board of Education, NORWALK ACTS, our superintendent, Dr. Alexandra Estrella, my mayor, Harry Rilling, BOD Chair Colin Hosten, and the nearly 12,000 students of Norwalk's schools in sharing my utmost concerns with you directly.

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. As I've learned, this cut will mean that Norwalk Public Schools 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. We need this funding now more than ever.

Concerning me most is the potential detriment of this act for roughly 75% of Norwalk Public School (NPS) students, students of color! Furthermore over 60% of NPS students qualify for free or reduced lunch and a cut like the one proposed will have adverse effects on their academic achievements. On top of the pandemic "costs," in learning loss and school-childrens' academic growth, this cut would be an absolute travesty for our student population. Please do not do this.

A freeze in ECS funding will likewise disproportionately affect children and families of color in Norwalk the most, as nearly 20% of Norwalk Public Schools' students are English Language Learners.

ECS funding is vital for our student population.

Freezing ECS funding delays money that was promised to our students over a period of 10 years and will delay advances on equitable outcomes by underfunding our students and community for an additional two years.

As I've been informed, the current proposal potentially means that a child would likely go through their entire academic year tenure without ever benefiting from the full funding they are be entitled to; funding our community collectively fought to ensure was available to our students and population and were promised would be available to them over a period of years.

This proposal is detrimental to our students and community and I urge you to pledge to support the ECS phase-in proceed as planned and promised.

Again, I strongly urge you to reconsider freezing ECS funding and reconsider this approach to balancing the current state budget.

Respectfully,

April Wennerstrom

SGC Member and proud Norwalk Parent