

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Stacey and I live in Colchester and work in Manchester. I am writing this letter to express my opposition to H.B. 6439 and its pause of the ECS formula.

Over the past year our educators, parents, and students have had the difficult task of navigating distance and hybrid learning in response to the pandemic. The struggles they have faced have not only shined a light on but exacerbated the inequities within Connecticut's public school system. Equitably funding our districts is critical to the success of our students and communities at any time, and the challenges posed by COVID-19 means the funds to achieve these goals should be coming sooner not later.

Pausing the ECS phase-in for two years will do a great disservice to our students, particularly those who have additional learning needs and the negative effects will disproportionately impact districts with a large population of students who require and need adequate resources to receive the education we all consider to be a right. These communities cannot wait for ECS dollars to resume being phased in two years later. We need to continue to use the ECS formula and must fully fund the formula now so our students have immediate access to the resources they desperately need.

I understand these extraordinary times have impacted our state's budget, but our students have been demonstrating such resilience and dedication in these same extraordinary times. The federal money from the Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund should be used to provide more social-emotional supports and resources to our students — not used in place of properly funding the ECS formula.

It is unconscionable for us to even consider pausing funding based on student need, especially when S.B. 948, currently before the Education Committee, prioritizes fully and equitably funding districts based on the needs of our students, has the potential to close Connecticut's racial funding gap by 68%, and will make a real, tangible, and an immediate difference for our students.

Our students cannot keep waiting for the funding they need to learn. Turning a 10-year phase-in plan into a 12-year phase-in plan guarantees that a second-grade student will not experience a fully-funded education until they are a year shy of graduating high school. This is frankly unacceptable. The financial stability of a state should *never* come at the expense of our children's education.

I am urging you to reject the governor's proposed budget as it stands and consider the needs of our students as you craft a revised budget. It is past time we put them at the forefront of the conversation.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Stacey Jill Zackin, PhD, MSW, PCC  
Manager, WORK\_SPACE