

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF INCREASED EDUCATION FUNDING FOR NEW BRITAIN

Good afternoon, Rep. Geragosian and ladies and gentlemen of the Committee.

My name is Ann Speyer. I live at 13 Audubon Street in New Britain, along with my husband. We have owned a house here for a little over 30 years. I am also a teacher in the New Britain public schools for 20 years. I stand before you with a message that some of you know too well already: the New Britain School District and the City that supports it are in dire need of financial help.

Some basics: our requested education budget is 6.6% higher this year than last year. If the state aid to education is held at last year's level, we will begin \$7.8 million dollars behind. But, please add into that the \$12 million cut that the 2008-09 budget took the year before. Now we are nearly \$20 million behind in funding a decent educational program.

Basic fact number 2: New Britain's Grand List has shrunk 1.38% according to the Hartford Courant of January 30, 2009. Believe me, the city will not come up with the additional funds.

Basic fact number 3: PILOT money coming into New Britain will shrink 19.94% according to yesterday's Courant. New Britain provides Central Connecticut with hospitals, public housing, a vo/tech high school and two campuses of CCSU. This renders these lands untaxable. PILOT is supposed to make up the loss. It won't. This will further grind down New Britain's already weak ability to raise revenue for the schools and city services.

Basic fact number 4: New Britain schools serve many of Central Connecticut's most needy children. Surrounding communities keep their housing costs high. They count on the cities to absorb families in crises. Children of families in crises frequently need extra services. Unfortunately, New Britain's per pupil expenditure does not support these services. \$11,654, New Britain's per pupil expenditure according to the 2007-08 figures, sits right about middling for all Connecticut school districts.* This despite the fact that our students often need more help with language, with special needs, with social concerns due to their family situations. For too many budget years, we have cut back the number of paraprofessionals who help these students, cut back the number of social workers, the guidance counselors and then increased the number of students per teacher. This can't go on. We need help.

A philosophical point. In times of need it is the responsibility of all the people of a society to come together and help those who are hurting worst. It is through our government that we provide that help. As our elected officials, we look to you today to take another look at Governor Rell's proposed budget and find the financial support that the cities and their schools so desperately need. There are still areas of great wealth in the state of Connecticut. It is time that they are tapped to contribute to the future of our state. The costs of running underfunded educational systems will come back to hurt all the residents of this state. I ask that you fulfill your responsibilities as elected leaders and find the funds to support the appropriate education for all of Connecticut's children.

*<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/dgm/report1/basiccon.pdf>.