



December 8, 2009

Dear Representative Geragosian , Senator Harp and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

As the executive board of Stamford's Parent Teacher Council, representing the twenty PTOs in our city and 15,000 students, we are writing to protest the Governor's proposed cuts of \$426,769 in Stamford's ECS funding.

Stamford's school district has substantial and costly needs. Over 40% of Stamford's students qualify for free and reduced price lunch, almost 15% of its students are English Language Learners, 37% of its students come from homes where English is not the first language and about 10% of our students have disabilities. Despite this level of need, Stamford has historically been underfunded by the State. In fact, our district must rely on local funding for 86% of our budget. Our district receives one tenth the amount of ECS funding that most similarly situated municipalities, those in DRG H, receive. State aid makes up only about 7 percent of our school budget, while the Connecticut average for state aid is about 40 percent of a district's education budget.

Governor Rell's proposed cut of \$426,769 is not an arbitrary number. In 2007, the Legislature increased the base aid ratio from 6 percent to 13 percent for all Priority School Districts except one -- Stamford. Stamford's increase was only from 6 percent to 9 percent. Despite our needs, Stamford was somehow viewed as not deserving of the increase that all the other Priority School Districts were getting. Stamford's Democratic legislators convinced their party that there was no reason to exclude Stamford from this increase. That increase, \$426,769, was put back into the budget on a vote in which only Democrats supported the measure. Governor Rell let it become law without her signature. It is this money, money to which Stamford should have always been entitled as a Priority School District, that the governor now seeks to take away.

In our struggle to compensate for inadequate state educational funding, our city contends with divisive battles over the school budget every year. Year after year, our schools have to cut staff, services and programs. With dwindling resources, we must meet ever increasing mandates.

It is inconceivable that the state would wreak further havoc to our schools by cutting already promised funding. Such cuts will be devastating to our school budget. Regardless of the economic climate we are in, we must continue to properly educate all our children. Depriving students of needed educational resources will only cause our students to fall behind. The lasting consequences of an inadequate education are far more costly in the long run than any short term savings that may accompany such funding cuts.

We urge you not to make these cuts to Stamford's ECS funds. Neither our City nor our State can afford the lasting damage that will result.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cindy Grafstein  
Wendy Lecker  
Candy Yeager  
Owen Nieberg  
Regan Allan  
Shelagh Corporon,  
Cathy Drenckhahn  
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Stamford Parent-Teacher Council Executive Board

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