New Haven School Change
NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 21, 2013

TESTIMONY CONCERNING GOVERNOR'S BILL NO. 6357
AND IMPACTS OF THE FUNDING PROPOSALS IN NEW HAVEN

Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Maynard, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Governor's Bill No. 6357, *An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education*.

We are pleased with the proposed increase in ECS and in the number of Commissioner's Network Schools. We are interested in the proposed funding formula changes. We have many families eligible for free and reduced price lunch, probably higher than our percentage shows; for example, undocumented families whose children attend our schools often are uncomfortable filling out official forms. So, we would request that you take such circumstances into account when looking at the formula.

Much of the testimony below includes proposed cuts that are not statewide but specific to communities and programs. Many of the programs in New Haven will be impacted.

In New Haven, as in many cities and towns in Connecticut, we struggle to provide adequate programs and services for children with social, emotional, behavioral and physical health needs. As Chief of Wraparound Services for New Haven Public Schools, I work with many providers and others to utilize a framework that will improve our service delivery in a fashion consistent with school change and needs in the schools, families and community.

We rebuilt nearly all our schools, led the way in healthy school foods and a district-wide wellness plan and, in 2009, reached an historic agreement with our teachers and administrators that took school change to another level.

Our **vision** for transformation in our school change initiative is coherent, collaborative, and persistent reform to ensure that:

- Students are learning through meaningful and coherent experiences in individual classrooms, among different classrooms, and in the rest of their lives.
- Schools are centers for learning, where teams of adults take collective and empowered responsibility for students, working separately and together to move students from where ever they start to the highest performance levels, collaborating without fault.
- The district and schools are supporting, developing, adapting, and innovating for persistent change.

Our **goals** include college success, an increase in the graduation rate and reduction in the dropout rate, eliminating the achievement gap between New Haven students and the State average, and strengthening each school's effectiveness. And, we are making progress in our goals. Our graduation rate has jumped nearly 20% in

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several years. Our dropout rate has dropped. And the learning environment in our schools, as reported by parents, teachers, and students that we are told is the biggest survey in the city next to the US census, has consistently improved over the last several years.

Our **strategies** to achieve these goals include a portfolio of schools (so that each school will be organized and supported on its own unique path to success), talent (so that adults in the system will be managed as professionals to encourage collaboration, empowerment, and responsibility for outcomes – and this will enable us to attract, develop, and retain the highest caliber staff), and community and parents (so that the work of the school system will be as aligned as possible with the parents, community organizations and agencies who work on behalf of our students – and together, building community investment for the promise of college). We aggressively seek outside grants to assist us with school change, as evidenced by the Teacher Incentive Fund grant we were awarded in the fall by the U.S. Department of Education, with $53 million over five years to further the development of our teachers, and a recent planning grant for innovative Professional Development from the Gates Foundation that we share with Bridgeport.

We have nearly 21,000 students in our schools, with a structure of 29 pre-K-8, K-8 and several elementary schools, two middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, and nine other high schools, as well as several transitional schools. We also have the largest pre-K program in the state. More than 80% of our student population is minority, and more than 80% qualifies for free and reduced lunch. Five percent of our students change schools after October 1st each year – some moving within New Haven, and many arriving from other school systems, other states, and other countries.

What does all this mean? It means we can and must do more to educate our students– and we can do it with our many partners. New Haven's philanthropic, not-for-profit, governmental and business communities have been working together with us for school change utilizing all the strategies outlined above, and all are ready to do more. Continued state support for key reform components, like school turnaround and transformation and educator talent, is important, and so too is extending real support for the full range of needs faced by students raised in poverty.

Several years ago, United Way of Greater New Haven, New Haven Public Schools and the City of New Haven began an initiative known as Boost!, which is a customized version of community schools. Boost! is in 11 public schools, with at least five more added each year. It focuses on wraparound services, which are the non-academic supports that students need to succeed academically. We break them into four domains, which can often overlap:

- Social, emotional and behavioral
- Physical health and wellness
- Student engagement and enrichment
- Parent and community engagement

Students and families engage in similar services outside of the school system, and coordination and coherence of support have a much greater likelihood of success with a wraparound framework. In addition, resources for wraparound services are short, so coordination and alignment between internal and external providers can maximize resources. Finally, Boost! is building knowledge and systems to helping to prioritize wraparound services in the context of academic and other school system priorities.

A key foundation to Boost! is that participating schools list and analyze all their resources and "assets", and then analyze their gaps in the four wraparound domains. They then work with Boost! resources in reallocating or reframing their work within the domains, in a deliberative and cohesive fashion, sometimes with additional resources that are provided through a grant from First Niagara Bank and additional fundraising by United Way.

What are our concerns about the proposed funding eliminations and reductions?

The After School Program (recommended for elimination)

Three schools in New Haven currently receive State funding for large after-school programs: Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, Hill Central School and Ross/Woodward School. You will hear from others about the wonderful program at Coop, which truly engages the students there in meaningful programs related to the school's arts focus, enhancing student achievement and involvement. At Hill Central – which is a turnaround school in the Hill section of the city, with a large Latino population – the $51,280 program serves over 150 Pre-K-8 students in a wide range of enrichment programs. At Ross/Woodward, across town, a classical studies interdistrict magnet program, the $50,824 program serves nearly one hundred students, and the enrichment programs range from cultural cooking to a book club to math hoops to pop art. Achievement is on the rise at all these schools. In addition, we utilize over $127,000 in extended day funding at over 10 of our neediest schools, with such offerings as "Little Scientists," "Music Haven," "Solar Youth," "Community Mediation," and arts, dance, mediation and mentoring programs. These programs involve outside providers who come in to offer services to our students. In recent years, in addition to the program at Coop, formal after school programs have been offered at two schools, lasting for two years. They have been valuable to the students and families – parent activities are part of the grant – and we would urge you to consider expanding the program, not eliminating it.

We also are able to offer 21st century-funded programs in some of our schools, which – if they are cut on the federal level – will have a negative impact on our students.

At a time when student engagement and enrichment play such a key role in achievement, when we are seeing progress in closing the achievement gap, when our graduation rates are increasing and our dropout rates decreasing, it would be a shame to lose these programs and go backwards.

The Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program (CPEP) (recommended for elimination)

We have a multitude of programs right now in New Haven offered by CPEP:

- Game On – This is a summer math enrichment program, which last year serviced 35 students and is planned to service 105 students in the summer of 2013. We will not be able to offer it if the funds are eliminated – and it is making a difference with our students.
- Mission Possible – This is a science and math hands on projects on Saturdays which services 40 students.
- Dimension M – This is a math enrichment program that services 50 students in two schools.
- After School – We offer a science enrichment program servicing 40 students at three schools.

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We also are in talks about opening a high school program at one school that creates apps for smartphones, building upon the "Back Off Bullying (BOB)" smartphone program created there.

We are seeing these programs engage our students and build their science and math analytical skills, which again are critical to student achievement, and we urge you to continue them.

Non-Sheff Interdistrict Cooperation Grants (recommended for elimination)

New Haven has received just over $200,000 from interdistrict cooperative grants so far this fiscal year. With our history of interdistrict cooperation, through this grant and through our interdistrict magnet program, we are concerned that any such program would be eliminated – thus eliminating opportunities for our students that go beyond municipal and school district boundaries.

Parent Universities (recommended for elimination)

In New Haven, we offered a citywide Parent University at Gateway Community College on November 3, 2012, and we are offering another one there on April 6, 2013. We are also in the midst of planning neighborhood and school based Parent Universities. We recently were one of three school districts awarded the state Parent Academy/University grant, and we are using that funding for our citywide event and neighborhood offerings.

Our Parent University grew out of requests from parents across the city. We visited Boston's Parent University twice and modeled our program upon theirs (as did the State in structuring the Parent Academy grant). We offered over 35 workshops in three sessions/rounds, 9:30 – 11, 11:15 – 12:45, 1:45 – 3:15. Doors opened at 8. Nearly 300 parents participated; we had 100 volunteers in addition to presenters. We offered free child care (ages 3-12) a block away at Coop HS; nearly 100 youngsters participated in a variety of enrichment activities.

That was only the beginning. Our partner is New Haven Promise and our steering committee includes many community organizations, such as Adult Education, New Haven Family Alliance, Higher Heights, United Way of Greater New Haven, Boys & Girls Club, CARE Collaborative, PLTI, Christian Community Action, the New Haven Housing Authority, New Haven Early Childhood Council, Citywide Parent Leadership Team, and others. Churches around the city are helping us register people. Our partners are passionate about the potential for parents.

We believe that Parent University – especially since it will be offered on many levels – has the potential to reach a wide range of parents, enhancing our work with them on behalf of their children. And the State grant – this year at $79,166 – is an integral part of our plans and our success.

School Health Coordinator Pilot (recommended for elimination)

New Haven was one of two school districts fortunate enough to be awarded the school health coordinator pilot. The program was originally slated to receive $100,000 for this fiscal year; through rescissions, the amount has been reduced to $95,000.

We have been emphasizing the importance of school health for a long time in New Haven, and how physical health and wellness links with mental and behavioral health and student achievement. Our own healthy foods efforts, physical activity and wellness programs and initiatives in health4achievement and collaborations

link with our efforts to provide coordinated school health. We would like to expand the outreach and services of our School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and school nurses, and utilize Electronic Health Records so that we have accurate information for our students. (We are exploring alternative funding sources for some of this but would urge you to also consider additional funding for SBHCs and school nurses, as well as legislative changes allowing them to coordinate better and for SBHCs to serve students from a neighborhood and not just the school itself.) Nonetheless, even with our many efforts and accomplishments, we know we can do much more – and we need a school health coordinator to do so. Hiring one now, when the program is proposed for elimination, is difficult; without a school health coordinator, we will lack the deliberative, cohesive coordination that our students deserve if they are to be as healthy as possible.

Primary Mental Health (recommended for reduction)

There has been a spotlight on mental health issues in recent months, due to the tragic events in Newtown. Those issues are real, and they are everywhere. To reduce primary mental health funding at a time when it is needed more than ever – for screening of students and for interventions – appears to be pennywise and pound foolish. While New Haven has not benefited from this grant for years, we would urge that primary mental health service funding be increased, in a variety of ways, from school-based health centers to insurance eligibility. Regardless of who receives this funding, the experience of our educators who deal with students every day confirms that the need for primary mental health care is only growing, so that problems can be averted before they interfere with learning, and long before they become a crisis.

Support for Turnaround Schools, including Wraparound Services (recommended for reduction)

A crucial part of our School Change effort has been the turnaround and transformation of low performing schools. When we look at individual school performance in New Haven, we know that not all schools perform equally – that a handful of the lowest performing schools account for a significant portion of the achievement gap with the suburban communities. Launched last year as part of the Governor's reform package, the Commissioner's Network has been an important catalyst to these efforts. In partnership with the Commissioner and the NHFT, last year we launched an ambitious turnaround effort at High School in the Community (HSC), the first high school where we have attempted turnaround. State support has been critical to that effort, both in guiding the planning, and in the financial resources supporting the transformation process – and we are in active consideration with the State of additional Commissioner's Network partnerships, for which that same support will be critical.

In addition to the core school turnaround funds, the State has also supported wraparound funding for Commissioner's Network schools, including HSC. The school is using its wraparound services funding – which already is reduced through December cuts – for additional interventions, primarily social/emotional/ behavioral in the ALIVE program, discussed below. HSC has been revamping its curriculum and management as part of being a turnaround school. Its students have an abundance of issues and the school is just beginning its additional interventions. To reduce them further means we will reach fewer students, whose needs are so great.

K-3 Reading Assessment Pilot (recommended for reduction)

New Haven was fortunate enough to have one of our schools, Truman, be awarded a K-3 reading assessment pilot. Truman is located in the Hill neighborhood and many of its students are Latino. The reading

assessment pilot, which began in the fall, has been quite helpful with students K-3. We are seeing an increase in our literacy assessments, and would urge you to continue this pilot at the current amount – or increase it, if possible.

Healthy Foods Initiative (recommended for reduction)

In New Haven, we pride ourselves on serving health food for children, and have been doing so for some years now. The healthy foods initiative - $215,655 has been received thus far this fiscal year - has helped subsidize the additional cost of providing healthier foods. In addition, for some of our students, what they eat at school is their main and most nutritious meal of the day. We do not want to go backwards in what we provide. We want to keep our students as healthy as possible. With the historically flat federal reimbursement rates vs. inflation costs of food and labor, the lack of fiscal support forces districts to make poor choices by moving to less scratch cooking and more processed foods (less healthy than freshly prepared food). Salad bars and baked chicken will give way to the return of chicken nuggets, frozen veggies and prepacked meals. As science begins to confirm the connection with healthy eating, physical fitness and learning, the State cuts will cause a retreat from the many gains New Haven has led on over the last few years. Finally, shifting this into the CIA will make it less visible and easier to cut.

School Transportation Reimbursement (recommended for changes)

We applaud the notion of regional incentives for school bus transportation. In New Haven, we bus 18,000 students a year, with over 2,000 of them from 24 other towns. We have three tiers of schools for busing and operations, and have evolved an efficient system utilizing both large and small school buses. We would be happy to work with others in being efficient about busing – but we cannot afford the financial impact to our City if we are not reimbursed for our transportation.

Notes on other initiatives where funding can make a critical difference

New Haven Public Schools has social workers, psychologists and guidance counselors who work with our students on social, emotional and behavioral issues. We spend over $10 million on their services, and we still are not able to have all three full time in each school. We also have approximately 15 school-based health centers (SBHCs), which could, with additional resources, serve more students' physical and mental health needs, and could perhaps serve students in a neighborhood and not just one school. We are proud of what we are doing, but we know we need to do more. Our Boost! schools ask for more interventions and help for students with social, emotional and behavioral issues, and we try to provide that assistance. We brought in the Foundation of Arts and Trauma for a program called ALIVE in nine of the 11 Boost! schools, and we are seeing behavioral improvements, thanks to that program and our many other efforts.

We have been working to improve school climates in our schools, and our surveys bear out that we are doing so. We have implemented PBIS in 13 of our schools. We work with Dr. James Comer, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale Child Study Center and an associate dean at the Yale School of Medicine, to train a number of our schools in the School Development Program (SDP), which is a research-based, comprehensive K-12 education reform program grounded in the principles of child, adolescent, and adult

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development. Our professional development on classroom management and behavioral issues, for teachers, administrators and all school staff, is expanding. And we would like to do more.

As evidenced by testimony elsewhere, screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) is critical; a study in Washington State showed that a traumatic childhood takes 20 years off life expectancy and that social service agencies and public health communities screen for ACEs, but not the medical community.

In implementing the **Community Resilience Initiative (CRI)**, we would seek to eradicate community violence and school failure, reduce incarceration rates, improve overall health and, in short, create a safer, healthier community for children and families. Its impact will be assessed vis-à-vis results-based accountability (RBA), which could be done in conjunction with the work of the Appropriations Committee; it is a critical evaluation component of this effort. (We testified on SB 169 and CRI in Children Committee on Feb. 14th.)

The CRI builds upon already existing resources in New Haven, from schools to the United Way to the City to the MOMS Partnership to Clifford Beers, the Foundation for Arts and Trauma to Yale Child Study Center, the New Haven Family Alliance and The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven. CRI links with state and federal initiatives and builds in an infrastructure using four strategies:

1. Creation of the New Haven Trauma Coalition. A trauma-informed collaborative system of care to treat ACEs that involves the entire Greater New Haven community. The direction of the system of care will be guided by those who presently lead local, trauma-informed initiatives so that objectives will be focused and aligned. Co-chaired by the New Haven MOMS Partnership and Boost!, the Coalition will direct the CRI. The Coalition will also be responsible for citywide Crisis Response planning and management.
   Request: Support to hire a Coalition Staff Member: $70,000
2. Schools. New Haven Public Schools provide a unique, nearly ideal venue through which ACEs can be addressed. CRI proposes:
   a. ACEs screening for every public school student. Every child, every year, will be screened for ACEs and behavioral health problems, much as they are screened for immunization, vision, or reading, through a mix of school staff, SBHCs and private providers.
   b. ALIVE/PBIS or other robust school wide early intervention. The ALIVE (Animating Learning by Integrating and Validating Experience) program, which focuses on early intervention and prevention by reducing chronic stress in children K-12, PBIS and de-escalation trainings will be expanded to more schools, and all school personnel will be trained in trauma and its effects in the classroom, through a mix of school staff, SBHCs and private providers.
   c. Other school wide interventions, such as increased in-school counseling support and classroom-based interventions to address teaching of pro-social skills.
   d. CBITS and vigorous referral system. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in School (CBITS) will be available for students in grades 5-12. CBITS is a school-based, group and individual intervention.
   e. Crisis response teams at both the district and school level will be restructured to align with the Coalition.

   Request: Provide $100,000 per school to provide the above, for a total of $4.7 million.
3. Families. Train key providers in trauma-informed care to enable these providers to participate in the effort to address the toxic stress caused by ACEs focusing on:

a. Early Childhood Interventions, delivered through Home Visitors, Home and Center based day care providers, Pediatricians, Head Start, Nurturing Families, All Our Kin, Family Centered Services, Child First and others.
b. School Age Interventions, delivered through MOMS Partnership Community Hubs, Community Partners, Parent University, Family Resource Centers, School Based Health Centers, Pediatricians and Primary Care doctors.
c. Young Adult Interventions, delivered though the City of New Haven Youth Services Department, Gateway Community College, NHPS Adult Education and community providers.

Request: Provide $1.3 million to support technical assistance and training of New Haven Community

4. Community
   a. Media Campaign. A city-wide public health campaign will be designed to educate the public about ACEs and the lifelong impact of and health problems caused by toxic stress, with information about how to get help.
   b. Community-wide information sessions will be held to educate the public on mental health awareness and the lifelong impact of ACEs.
   c. Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) Program expanded in New Haven.
   d. The Domestic Violence Home Visit Intervention (DVHVI) will be grown.
   e. Increased focus on mentoring, health and career preparation, provided by New Haven Youth Services Department, Youth Haven, schools and many others.

   Request: Provide $450,000 to support community based interventions and public health campaign

The requested funding builds upon the millions in funding already spent in the community. What the funding does is allow the infrastructure to be embedded deep within the community, so that students and their families can be served, early and cohesively. We can weave together what is already taking place – whether home visits or the growth of community hubs – and expand it deliberatively and collaboratively. And we can measure it and help develop customized models so that it can grow in other communities too.

Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences does not come free. But we believe that addressing them early and cohesively means that we as a community and a State will save far more in social, emotional and fiscal costs by doing so.

Thank you.

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