

As a member of the New Britain Board of Education, a proponent for equity amongst all students, and a school counselor in another high-need, low-income district in Connecticut, I would like to strongly urge the State of Connecticut to look to make the funding for all districts much more equitable. It is astonishing and unfair that the state has give about a 68% increase in funding to magnet and charters while giving a less that 10% increase in funding to public school districts. Public schools educate all of our students; while magnets and charter have their limits, so for whatever reason a student cannot get into a magnet or chart school, what message are we sending to them? They are just not worth it; with all due respect that seems to be the message, however, it is wrong. All of our students are worth it, and many times the students in public schools have higher needs that magnet because their parents are busy working 2-3 jobs for example or for whatever reason they missed the deadline to apply for magnet schools, and school becomes a place that our youth can get the support they may be lacking at home. Without adequate funding, it is very difficult and at times impossible for public schools to provide the services and resources they so direly need.

Especially in the city of New Britain, that I am so proud to be a product of their public schools; our students are significantly underfunded, even when compared to districts in the same DRG I and with very similar populations. In the 2013-2014 school year, New Britain's per pupil expenditures was \$12,842, while the State average was \$15,180 and the DRG I, which New Britain is in average was \$16,027. The ECS (Equal Cost Sharing) formula is supposed to include factors like poverty level of the students and families. While about 80% of New Britain students qualify for free/reduced, we are significantly underfunded year after year. The ECS formula at this point seems to be very arbitrary and not at all equal or equitable. For the upcoming 2015-2016 school year, in order for New Britain to just maintain the status quo system, we would need \$5.3 million increase in our budget. This increase would account for contractual salary increases and increases in benefits costs. In order to reduce class sizes in New Britain, we would need to hire more teachers, which again costs money, and without funding from the state, would be nearly impossible for New Britain to address our class size concerns. Even with lower than average and inequitable funding, the Consolidated School District of New Britain has made gains in our students reading schools, the graduation rate, and English Language Development. Just imagine the gains we could make in New Britain if we were more equitably funded. At the very least, please help New Britain maintain where we are at now, which would mean just an increase

of \$ 476 per student per year or more simply \$2.64 per student per day. From the bottom of my heart, I sincerely hope when the State of Connecticut looks at funding for the upcoming year, New Britain and the other districts that are significantly underfunding receive some true equity. We have great students in the city of New Britain, and in the state of Connecticut as a whole, please just help give *all* of our students what they deserve.

My sincere thanks,

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Facts: ECS formula which is suppose to include multiple factors such as student poverty has been frozen at an arbitrary level. In other words - it is not being applied.

To maintain a status quo system for next year, we need a \$5.3 million increase. This accounts for contractual increases in both employee salary/benefits and other services as well as facility upkeep/utilities.

In 2013 -14 New Britain was ranked 157 th in per pupil expenditures at \$12,842 - while the State average was \$15,180 and our DRG I average was \$16,027. Within our DRG four cities receive a higher per pupil allocation - Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Windham. It is true that the State funds two thirds of our budget - however, our students are among the neediest children in the State. They need more. Equity is not everyone receiving the same ...it is receiving what you need....our children, the majority of

whom come from poverty (free/reduced lunch approx.79-80%) need more not less. We must be properly equipped to close the achievement gap (opportunity gap, accessibility gap, resource gap). We need to lower class size, increase support for Tier II and Tier III students, offer more children extended day/extended year and wrap around services.

Now our circumstances are not all dire - the State is still discussing mandating All Day Kindergarten - which is something we have accomplished and sustained for years! The State is talking about school resource officers and Mou's with local police departments which we have enalready done. Secondary education reform and increased credit requirement - done!

Aggressively Addressing chronic absenteeism and closely monitoring attendance - doing it!

Creatively tackling the issue of under credited high school students - Satellite Academy.

Whether you agree with the Common Core or not it is the State's adopted standards and staff have done a yeoman's job developing curriculum and securing textbooks aligned to these standards. We have successfully worked with our local government to provide resources - a two year City bond authorization that allowed the Boe to purchase new text books and provide classroom technology throughout the district and a previous increase (2013-14) in local contribution by \$4 million.

Putting our plea for an additional \$5.3 million (to fund status quo) in perspective - based on 10,500 students- that dollar amount equates to increasing our expenditures by \$ 476 per student per year or \$2.64 per student per day.