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Date: March 3, 2015 at 7:48:58 AM EST

To: "Beloin-Saavedra, Sharon" <saavedras@csdnb.org<<mailto:saavedras@csdnb.org>>>

Subject: Testimony on HB 6824 the Governor's proposed budget

Good evening Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker and Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sharon Beloin Saavedra and I am the President of the New Britain Board of Education. I respectfully submit testimony today on behalf of the 10,000 plus students who attend New Britain schools.

I have concerns over HB 6824 which implements the Governor's budget. Although I fully appreciate and understand the financial difficulties the State faces, I cannot fathom going down this road again - adopting a multi year proposal of flat funding ECS while expecting our educators to close the largest achievement gap in the nation. This would be pulling the rug out from under us. You cannot continue to strive for excellence by way of passing laws and new mandates without the resources to implement. Poor communities such as New Britain with a per capita income of \$20,655 and a median household income of \$40,294 ...is not able to tax its citizens enough to make up the difference.

Our school system has a student poverty rate of just under 80% ...
We have a minority student population of 79.6%....
38% of our students come from non English speaking households....

Our per pupil expenditure is \$12,842 compared to the State average of \$15,180.... A difference of \$2,338 or 18%
NB is ranked 157 in our State for per pupil expenditures....
On the flip side - our mill rate is the third highest in the State at 49 mills....

We must take a serious look at the damage that will be done if ECS is flat funded, if the Commissioner Network grants are cut and if the Priority School District grants are reduced.
New Britain needs an additional \$5.3 million just to fund the status quo operation next year. We cannot improve student outcomes if we have to lay our teachers off thus increasing class size and reducing course offerings. Our high school is currently going through the NEASC accreditation process - we need more support not less and we need to be able to provide a stable, consistent environment with a viable continuum of services and program options to meet the diversity of needs our students have.
How can we hold our teachers and administrators accountable for student achievement if the resources are not provided? And by resources I mean classroom teachers, interventionists and para professionalsour children in Tier II and Tier III need small group instruction, the availability of alternate settings, extended hours and wrap around services.
Why do my public school students have to go to aging/under supplied buildings while the State funds new magnet and charter schools? Why are the school systems that serve the majority of school children treated as less than? In New Britain, Our poverty rate is on the rise as is our minority student enrollment. You cannot change the academic trajectory of the State if the State fails to adequately support communities with the highest concentration of poverty.
Please consider a more equitable distribution of the \$48 million in the budget for new magnets/Charters with some of the poorest school districts in the state .

Please do not send the message to my New Britain public school students that they are less of a priority than the minority of students who attend the academic silos of Charters and Magnets. Unlike those silos, traditional public schools are all inclusive and act as the default school when students are counseled out of Charters, Magnets, private schools and technical schools. We accept everyone and counsel no student out. There is no lottery, no selection process - here is the place your civil rights of a public education are provided.

Sharon Beloin Saavedra, President
New Britain Board of Education
Urban Voices