

March 2, 2015

To: Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee

From: **Coalition for New Britain's Youth** ([www.coalitionmbc.org](http://www.coalitionmbc.org))

RE: HB 6824 and Proposed funding cuts to vital family, school and community supports

The Coalition is a citywide group of community stakeholders committed to improving the lives of New Britain's youth, birth through age 21 by using **quality** community data **collection and assessment** to develop and implement strategies, align efforts and **continuously** evaluate progress. **To ensure a diverse voice, the** Coalition includes parents, educators, government officials, health and social service agencies.

As a direct result of state and private funding to support local planning efforts, the Coalition and our school and community partners have made a tangible difference in the lives of New Britain's Youth:

- Access to **high-quality, affordable preschool** [for New Britain's three- and four-year-olds](#) has grown by 10% from 593 children to 643 in 2014. [The number of](#) New Britain five year olds entering kindergarten with an early childhood experience has increased from 38% in 2003 to 78% in 2014.
- The rate of **chronically absent** for elementary school students dropped from 19.5% in 2012 to 13.0% in 2013. And the 2013 rate is less than half the 2010 rate of 29%.
- **Creation of a summer learning program** has improved academic outcomes for New Britain's lowest scoring youth. Eighty-percent of the 613 elementary school student attendees completing the pre and post-test exhibited literacy growth; fewer children attending the summer program showed learning loss compared to non-participating peers; fewer children were chronically absent from school in the fall after participating in the summer than the school year prior; and, 99% of students who participated over two summers showed decreases in office referrals due to behavioral issues.

In 2013, the Coalition was recognized by the national Grade-Level Reading Campaign for community leadership in helping young children succeed in school. New Britain is also often noted in CT and beyond for its pioneering work in addressing summer learning loss and chronic absenteeism. Recently, New Britain's work on reducing childhood obesity was profiled by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, again drawing significant national attention to local health [and](#) wellness efforts.

Over the past five years, the Coalition's has successfully leveraged state funding support for over \$1,000,000 in private resources to support New Britain children and their families. While we are very proud of our efforts, there remains work to be done in New Britain and in communities across the state that are building diverse collaboratives to tackle our most pressing educational and social issues.

**To continue our work, we urge the Appropriations Committee to fully fund the following items that have been reduced or eliminated in the Governor’s proposed budget:**

- School Readiness Quality Enhancement funds reduced by 5%.
- Local community plans, HB 6004 (\$18,000 to New Britain through the Office of Early Childhood – leverages more than \$100,000 in private funds).
- Early Literacy grant (\$50,000 used to address chronic absenteeism in New Britain).
- After-school programs involved nearly 500 New Britain youth, funded through the State’s Extended School Hours and Summer School Grants.
- Parent leadership training programs - \$20,000 eliminated from the Parent Trust Fund.
- Summer youth employment - \$2 million cut statewide; would reduce number of New Britain youth participants from 300 to 150.

We understand the severe budget constraints and many difficult choices you will make over the next several months. As you shape this year’s budget, understand that the issues discussed in this note are much more than just money. These items represent the all-important investment in the early years of our state’s youth. Research and our own experience show that this upfront investment is a smarter, more cost effective approach to school and life success than spending on less-effective, more costly interventions down the road.

For more information please contact Kim Russo, Chair of the Coalition for New Britain Youth, at 860-229-6018, ext 309. Or email to [david@coalitionnbc.org](mailto:david@coalitionnbc.org)