

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

My name is Sue Truglio and I am President of the New Britain Federation of Teachers as well as a jurisdictional Vice President of American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut. I respectfully submit testimony today on behalf of the nearly 800 teachers and 10,000 students of the Consolidated School District of New Britain.

I would like to address HB6824 as it pertains to the Governor's budget – particularly cuts in public education. New Britain's student population poverty rate is about 80%, our tax rate is 49% with an average household income of \$40,000. Our per pupil expenditure is 18% below the state average and 24% below our DRG. At one point the formula for ECS took into consideration the financial landscape of the districts –making it fairer for those of us in Poverty districts. However, ECS funding has been frozen at an arbitrary level –making it nearly impossible for us to provide what our students need. While flat funding public education, the Governor's budget is calling for an additional \$48 million for Charter Schools. What message does this send to those of us who work in public schools? What message does it send to our students who chose to attend neighborhood schools or who are not successful in obtaining a spot in the Charters or Magnets?

The teachers and students of New Britain are greatly affected by this. Our students are some of the neediest in the state – yet we receive the least amount of funds to educate them. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between class size and student success. Our class size average is 27:1 . Of those 27 students there are on average 5 special needs students, 5 students functioning below grade level, 3 students with behavior concerns and 8 English Language Learners. As teachers we are held accountable for student achievement – yet we have little or no resources to help us achieve these goals.

As educators we educate the whole child- Due to lack of adequate funding New Britain has been forced to cut back on support services such as guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, reading specialists, para educators and educational tutors. All very essential personnel needed to close the gap. The gap which exists due to poverty, language barriers, lack of resources and opportunities.

We do have a Commissioner's Network School in New Britain, Frank J. Diloreto Magnet School. As a member of the network, Diloreto has shown great gains in numerous areas, however I question the rationale of cutting 4,700,000 from the Network budget and at the same time increasing the number of schools eligible to join. The result will surely affect the success of those schools already in the Network.

Increasing the Graduation rate has been a main focus for New Britain. This is nearly an impossible task without additional funds. Funds for more teachers in the core subjects as well as having the ability to offer more electives to our students. The diversity of classes offered at the high school has taken a hit over the years due to budget cuts thus making it difficult to meet the needs of our students.

If flat funded, New Britain will be short \$5.3 million dollars just to fund the status quo operation of our schools next year. If we are to successfully prepare our students for the challenges of the real world- make them career and college ready – we need more funds. We need a higher per pupil expenditure – one that allows us to give our public school children a fair chance at a good education: Smaller class size, more support services, more teachers and more diverse classes that are appropriate to ensure our students' success.

I urge you to reconsider the funding allocations proposed in the Governor's budget. Particularly the ECS flat funding, the increase of funds to magnet and charter schools and the reduction of funding for the Commissioner's Network while at the same time increasing the number of schools eligible.

The needs of our Public School students, particularly in Urban districts such as New Britain should be considered over and above the students who attend the academic silos of Magnets and Charters. New Britain has begun to move forward – allow us to continue to progress – and please don't push us backwards!!

Sue Truglio

President, New Britain Federation of Teachers-local 871

Lifelong resident of New Britain and Veteran teacher of 31 years

