

Dear Education Committee Members,

I would first like to acknowledge the difficult task and great responsibility you have in making fair and equitable decisions on behalf of all Connecticut school children.

Today I am advocating for the 10,000 plus children who attend New Britain's public schools. I am filled with emotion and armed with facts as I write this testimony. Urban communities care for and support some of our State's neediest children and their families. Poverty rates are increasing among our school children.

In 2013 81% of New Britain's students receive free/reduced lunch compared to the state average of 36.7%; New Britain's per pupil expenditure is \$12,842 compared to the state average of \$15,180 - a difference of \$2,338 per pupil. New Britain is ranked 157 in per pupil expenditures.

Question: why do other Cities in DRG I receive more dollars per pupil than New Britain? Why are Magnet Schools funded at a higher level? Why are there increased dollars in the Governor's budget for Charter Schools and Magnet Schools but no increases in ECS for local public schools? Why are the Goals of the Sheff settlement of desegregation and reduced isolation not state wide goals? How is it that the State can adopt student standards(Common Core) and set benchmarks/timelines but not adequately fund the implementation and delivery of services? This State "enjoys" the distinction of having the largest achievement gap in the Nation. What are we collectively and cooperatively going to do about it?

System structures matter: class size, student interventions and supports, facility maintenance, 21st century instructional materials, exposure to enriching activities and knowledge enhancing experiences. Public schools are not failing our children - our funding structures along with our housing and zoning policies that create concentrated areas of poverty in various communities are failing our children.

Laws that seek to maintain the status quo are failing our children. What is fair and equitable?

We must move forward and we must bring all children along on that journey.

Please consider supporting an equitable distribution of the \$48 million the Governor allocated to Charters and Magnets to include public schools in our Priority School Districts.

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Urban Voices

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