

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 5044 My name is Joseph Martino and I am the Director of Finance for Danbury Public Schools. I have been an educator in Connecticut for almost 15 years. In addition I also serve on the Board of Directors for The Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO). As the Director of Finance I have a key vantage point in a school district because we work closely with school boards, administrators, staff, public officials and the community.

I come to you today with a school district very much at a cross road. Danbury faces many key challenges uncommon to most districts in the state such as:

- Enrollment growth across all grade levels of 2% well above the state growth rates.
- Projected continued growth of 1-2% in the years ahead
- Increases in the number of low-income students that Danbury serves which has increased by more than 20% over the past 5 years
- Highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) state wide
- ECS funding well below many other comparative districts
- A net per pupil which ranks 165 out of 169 city and towns

All of this against a continued period of rising costs due to health insurance, transportation, implementation of new standards such as teacher evaluation, and contractual obligations. All of these factors have forced the Board of Education to submit a budget increase of 5.6 million dollar or 4.59%.

I do offer the following comments with respect the Governor's budget recommendation for fiscal year 2016-17 in hopes of continuing this support.

In the Governor's proposed budget which calls for reductions in ECS by \$11.5 million from the FY17 budget included in the biennium budget approved in June 2015. This reduction directly impacts Danbury's ECS increase that was proposed of 1 million dollars. We are grateful for our past ECS funding increases without this funding our district would not have all day kindergarten, ELL teachers, summer programs, and increased Administrative support just to name a few. Cuts in other areas of the Governor's budget will continue to erode at our core programs with direct impacts on several areas of funding such as our Excess Cost, Transportation, Magnet, and Priority School grants. The cut to these grants alone amount to hundreds of thousands in vital funding. If this funding in not restored Danbury will be forced to make major cuts which include cuts to classroom resources, increase class size which is currently at 27 in some classrooms and reduce additional services to our students. Danbury urges the legislature to maintain ECS funding for FY17 at the level approved in the biennium budget.

Funding of our public school education system is a core value of the State of Connecticut I ask you on behalf of Danbury's students to support restoring all the education cuts so that you're your help all of Connecticut's school child still have their best days ahead of them.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you in provide input to the Appropriation Committee today.

Sincerely,

Joseph Martino
Director of Finance
Danbury Public Schools