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Good Evening Representative Walker, Senator Osten, Senator Formica and the distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the ECS funding for the town of Groton.

In the current proposed budget Groton receives the largest cut in the state, approximately 14.17 million dollars. Groton cannot function with this massive of a cut. Cuts of this size cannot be absorbed within a fiscal year and would require a substantial change in education of our children or a 23% tax increase on residents.

The ECS calculation excludes 1200 military dependent students who are not eligible for Husky as they have Tricare health insurance. Almost one quarter of the student population of Groton was excluded from the ECS calculation due to their health insurance alone. Groton is proud to host the only Navy base in Connecticut but by hosting a Navy base a substantial amount of water front property and navy housing is nontaxable. The Navy provides many jobs and as such the State of CT must consider the Navy dependent population into ECS funding.

Our town has been falsely classified as affluent. Groton families are from a wide range of household incomes. The median household income for the 40th district is $65,070. The new formula falsely labels Groton as affluent. Groton has been labeled a distressed community twice within the last five years. Groton is not affluent. The educational funding formula must consider our town's unique needs.

Groton currently has a satisfactory school system. Our class sizes are small and the district contains a blue ribbon elementary school. Children are prepared for college and the workforce. This cut would require substantial reduction of paraprofessionals, teachers, administrative and support staff. Class sizes would increase and activities would be substantially decreased. This type of outlook is not the school system Groton families deserve.

Absorbing this massive cut to ECS would result in a 23% increase in property taxes. This increase is unaffordable by not only Groton residents but Groton businesses as well. Electric Boat is hiring 4000 employees over the next few years and building a 1.5-billion-dollar facility. A tax increase of 23% could hamper Electric Boat's expansion planning.

I urge this Committee to restore the proposed cuts and fix the way Groton ECS is calculated by including the Navy families. Thank you for your time and consideration and I am available to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Representative Christine Conley