March 6, 2019
To: Appropriations Committee
From: Joseph Martino, Director of Finance
Re: H.B. No. 7148

Chairman Walker, Chairman Osten, and members of the Appropriations Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding HB 7148. My name is Joseph Martino and I am the Director of Finance for Danbury Public Schools. I have had the honor of being an educator in Connecticut for over 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 all stakeholders.

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 projections of 1-2% in the coming years which is well above the state growth rates.
- Increases in the number of low-income students that Danbury serves
- Increasing special education costs and services
- One of the Highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) state wide
- ECS funding well below many other comparative districts
- A net per pupil which ranks 169 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 7.7 million dollar or 5.85%.

I do offer the following comments with respect the Governor’s budget recommendation for fiscal year 2019-20.

In the Governor’s proposed budget which calls for an increase of Danbury’s ECS funding by $2.4 million. This increase is a direct result of the new Educational Cost Sharing Formula which we ask
for your continued support so Danbury can begin to receive our fair share of funding. We are grateful for our past ECS funding increases and without this funding our district would not have all day kindergarten, ELL supports, and additional programs to help our students. Danbury urges the legislatures to continue to support the new ECS funding formula for FY20 and beyond.

Caps in other areas of the Governor’s budget such as the excess cost grant will continue to put stress on our funding for special education. We would ask that you continue to review special education funding as these costs continue to for all school districts.

In closing, funding of our public school education system is a core value of the State of Connecticut and I ask you on behave of all of Connecticut’s students to support the new ECS formula so Danbury’s students can continue to grow and learn.

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

Joseph D. Martino
Director of Finance
Danbury Public Schools