Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am deeply concerned by the proposals in the Governor’s proposed budget in that they transfer the state’s responsibility to the municipalities. By requiring local districts to foot the bill for the normal cost of funding the Teachers’ Retirement System, by capping the state’s Excess Cost Grant, and by reducing ECS funding, communities will be left to individually determine how to manage education, for better or for worse.

The state has instituted new initiatives and reforms in the past decade. Now is when we need to maintain our investment in our public schools – to support one of the reasons people move to this state. Yet three proposals shift the state’s responsibility to individual communities.

Requiring contributions from local communities for the normal cost of funding the Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) is perhaps the most egregious shift. In Newtown, as in every other district, our teacher’s salaries are largely determined by the bargaining climate in the state and surrounding towns. The pensions are even less under local control, as they are managed and determined at the state level. Further, the proposal unfairly taxes communities in areas with a higher cost of living.

Additionally, the acceleration of the elimination of the Education Cost Sharing Grant and the cap on the Special Education Excess Cost Grant, will exacerbate the demands on our local budget and the ability to provide quality educational services.

None of the shifts from the state to the local districts should be taking place, but at the very least, please do not support the shift in TRS funding. The state should be maintaining its investment in the state’s crown jewel, not looking to pay off its debts with it.

Thank you,

Michelle Embree Ku
28 Platts Hill Rd.
Newtown, CT