



CITY OF NEW HAVEN

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Senator Osten, Representative Currey, Representative Walker and members of the Education and Appropriations Committees. My name is Justin Elicker and I am the Mayor of New Haven. I am here to speak in support of HB 5003 An Act Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut. I am particularly here to support increased flexible education funding going toward those public school districts that support a high percentage of high-needs students, such as New Haven.

Properly educating our children is the most important way we can address the challenges our state faces related to poverty. When provided a high-quality education, with resources behind it that include academic supports, social and emotional supports, special needs supports when necessary, and extracurricular supports, a child has the most concrete opportunity to succeed – get secondary degrees, go into a long-term, well-paying job, feel self-worth, purchase a home, be a productive and happy resident.

Large cities and some towns in Connecticut, like New Haven, take on the responsibility for the state of supporting children with many more needs than most of our suburban counterparts. In New Haven, where we serve over 19,000 students, 70% of our students are low-income, 18% are English learners. Many of our students may be homeless, face trauma in their personal lives, sometimes are not exposed to extensive vocabulary in their early years, struggle with English, and don't have the financial resources for afterschool programs or extra supports. Any reasonable person would say that we need to spend *more* on those children who face these types of extreme challenges to allow them an equal educational opportunity similar to their peers who do not face such challenges. However, in our state we do the opposite. School districts in wealthier towns by and large spend more than school districts in urban areas on a per child basis.

As an example, New Haven spends \$17,500 per student, less than the state average of \$19,134 and much less than say New Canaan that spends nearly \$23,000 (\$22,905) per student. And while the overwhelming majority of larger districts are low-income (New Haven has 70% of our student body that are low-income) most of our suburban counterparts have a very small percentage of low-income students. (New Canaan's is 0%.) This should be the opposite. In New Haven, we should be spending much more on our students, who are facing more challenges and have more needs, than our wealthy suburban counterparts. Meanwhile our taxes in New Haven are much higher than our counterparts.

State funding over the years has undoubtedly helped and we are grateful for it. Recent additional funding from the American Rescue Plan has been crucial and stewarded well by our district. But long-term, reliable funding is simply not at the level it needs to be to give all kids an equal opportunity. HB 5003 is a significant step in the right direction, increases annual investment for kids who have higher needs, and I urge your support.