

COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS CONCERNING THE 2020-21 BUDGET (May 19, 2020)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<p>Connie Konya Library Media Specialist K.T. Murphy Elementary School Media office: 203-977-5334</p>	<p>To the board members and Mayor Martin: My name is Connie Konya and I am a Stamford Public schools employee for almost twenty seven years. I urge you to move the 14 million dollars into the school budget so that Dr. Lucero and the Board of Education members will not be making cuts to staff, programs or services for the 2020-2021 year. To imagine a school with fewer people in a building compounded with possible restrictions for distancing will likely create a need for more staff not less staff. We already have staff making up the slack for the shortage of substitutes when we are physically in school. My department has already seen cuts. The school library media specialists and the paras were called to separate meetings after school in December with the Assistant Superintendents and director of Human Resources. We were informed that the media center paras would be cut for the next year. There were no board members present and only a little discussion. Ironically, we are key figures in the current distance learning plan. All Stamford student accounts and passwords used now for Distance Learning were established and are maintained by the library staff and tech leaders. Our students were taught how to access these with our instruction. Since distancing began, every account problem that arises is usually filtered to us. The media specialists have not been just holding storytimes. We have been holding lots of hands. Numerous instructional videos have been made on the spot by my colleagues to address needs of students, teachers and parents. These have been shared across the district. Some media specialists have continued to go to their school to pass out devices despite the warning from the central office and SEA that teachers should not be in the buildings. I am not writing this only for the media department. I speak for all teachers. The distance learning doesn't work without the connection of the teacher to the students. We are the essential workers. We are on the front line. Administrators and central office staff could not have this plan if not for the hard working teachers who adapted quickly to this way of teaching. Our teachers have done self-directed professional development to keep themselves afloat. We have had more PD this past nine weeks than we have seen in many years. This learning happens at night and on weekends while a majority of the teachers manage a family as well. We are doing our job and doing it well. As city leaders, you are charged with the job of making our city work. As city leaders your job is to worry and wonder if cuts made to Stamford Schools will still keep us attractive to the next home buyers. The news is filled with stories that city dwellers are moving out to the suburbs. We should be competing for those families. Stamford should not be in the headlines with cuts to the BOE budget. As city leaders you have a job to adjust the funding and keep our schools strong and all staff in place. Sincerely, Connie Konya Stamford Schools Employee</p>

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<p>Ray Milo, MBA, MEd Business Instructor Academy of Information Technology & Engineering Stamford, CT 06905</p>	<p>The Larger Reality Our children have been out of school since March 13th. Our school district has struggled mightily to keep learning in progress. We were woefully unprepared. Teachers have been working frantically to provide distance learning with whatever technology they or students have or have been able to access. There is no primer here, it is “seat of the pants”. Teachers have used their ingenuity, skills and personal commitment to go way over the top to keep our children engaged and enriched. Teachers are working harder than ever now, with little with which to work. Distance learning is a new concept, especially for our elementary and middle school students, not to mention teachers. Wistful thinking has everyone focused on going back to physical classes in September. The reality will probably prove otherwise. Not that it can’t be done, but it will take an army of teachers, paras and custodians to make it happen. And it will also take money. More money than is being expended now. And more teachers! And more paras! And more custodians! Students will be the losers in this equation. There will be shorter days, shorter periods, and even a shortage of professionals, the team needed to keep learning in Stamford at a high level of quality. So here we are at budget time, crunch time, crisis time. You, the Board of Finance, sees a \$35 million shortfall. As the school system is ½ of the budget, it might seem to make sense to split the shortfall \$17.5 between the city and the schools. For the school system, this would mean eliminating ALL paras, ALL “non-essentials” such as music, art, even language, (Probably not sports.) and about 60 full time teachers, JUST when we need the Paras and the teachers the most. What’s more, we will need MORE of these professionals in September, if we even try to accommodate the new health requirements to send our children back to their physical schools. So instead of eliminating jobs, you really need to look forward as to how you can ADD jobs. And now we discover that there is a \$14 million savings from last year’s city operating budget! I know, that wasn’t supposed to be leaked, but now that we know, and we also know the dire predicament of our educational system, why can’t that “surplus” be used for keeping teachers, keeping paras, and keeping our children WELL educated. There is a social, moral and ethical obligation here to look ahead. There is also a management obligation to support those who have risen above and beyond the call of duty. And there is also the social and moral obligation to give our children the best education they deserve. You want more from teachers and staff than you are willing to give. They are already doing that. Cut educational finances, and the children will get what you paid for. Less. Stamford has a chance to shine here. Does the Board? Respectfully,</p>
<p>Ron Levinsky Rogers International School</p>	<p>Freezing teacher’s wages for the next two years presents obvious hardships and some hardships that are not so apparent. Besides not being able to keep pace with the rising cost of living for the next 2 years, a wage freeze will affect our benefits and our pensions.</p>

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	<p>Each year, employee benefit costs increase. Without a salary increase for 2 years, teacher's net pay will be less when increased benefit costs are deducted from our checks.</p> <p>As far as pensions, retiree payments are calculated based on the teacher's highest 3 year salaries. If there is a wage freeze, there will be no increase to our pension calculations for the next 2 years.</p> <p>The negative repercussions to teachers would be devastating if this wage freeze plan was agreed to.</p> <p>I say, "No way!" We have a contract.</p> <p>Honor it.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
Yasmin Tirado	<p>Hello,</p> <p>My name is Yasmin Tirado and I am currently an ESL at Northeast Elementary School. I am shocked to learn that during this Global Pandemic, which is a difficult time for all, this proposal is on the table. I have been in the district for about 20 years and 13 of those years have been teaching. I had my salary frozen for two years and we did not have a say in that.</p> <p>During this difficult time we have gone above and beyond in adapting to this pandemic. Not only have we've been working longer hours to make this transition accessible to all our families, but we gone above and beyond. For example taking phone calls later in the evening because that is the time parents are able to reach us. I know I am not the only educator teaching myself how to use Google classroom and all it has to offer. I have not only been a teacher to my students, but to my parents and even my coworkers. I have sat in my dining room table all day and stay until late nights to figure things out or work with my families. On top of that we take care of our own families.</p> <p>This a very delicate subject and I believe educators should have the time to gather themselves. This is a strenuous situation and time for the great educators in our system. Sometimes we are burnt out but guess what we wake up the next day, shut everything else going on off, so our students can be successful.</p> <p>Why are you penalizing teachers and schools? Why are you penalizing students and their families? Why don't we push these types of meeting down the road until every teacher gets their voices heard? Did you forget that our insurance costs continue to rise, our mortgages, our taxes?</p> <p>Why rush when you aren't even certain what the Federal stimulus will be? Perhaps the Federal funds will be enough to relieving the economical situation the city finds itself in? I don't believe all the information needed to make a thoughtful and wise decision has arrived yet. There is just too many variables at hand here. This is a very poor time to bring up such a proposal and I truly believe that we should stop defunding or undercutting teachers salaries. This is not the time for such measures.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>

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<p>Brian Piechowicz</p>	<p>To the Board</p> <p>I would like to show my support for all of the educators and staff of the Stamford Public School District and Stamford Youth Bureau.</p> <p>Change and uncertainty are two of the hardest things for young people to deal with. Now, in this time of uncertainty and change, we should be trying to support our young people and provide them all of the resources they need to combat their fears that are no doubt surrounding this crazy time. Taking away resources, whether it be teachers or money or the programs that the SYB offer, will only serve to add a layer of stress on our youth that they simply do not need.</p> <p>In this time of uncertainty and change, I ask that you provide as much stability and support to our youth as they are our future and the most vulnerable segment of our population.</p> <p>Thank you for listening</p> <p>Sincerely</p>
<p>Katy Gale</p>	<p>Board of Finance Members,</p> <p>Thank you for allowing this time to give input. These are unprecedented times for all of us. It is likely that it is just the beginning. We must carefully examine our actions, and not move too quickly to make unnecessary cuts that will have deleterious effects on our children and our public school teachers for years to come.</p> <p>The anchor in our community for our children and our families is the public school system. That is a fact. I am a lifelong Stamford resident who is a product of the public school system, as are my children. I am also an educator in another district, so I understand what teachers continually do for students and families</p> <p>In these past few months, the teachers have stepped up in the most remarkable manner, and continue to do so, to keep our children engaged and learning. To say that they have worked long hours is an understatement. It is because they have chosen this profession that they go to such great lengths for their students. Any parent can tell you how they need their teachers, especially during these uncertain times. We cannot place a price tag on that connection. We must not,</p> <p>We need to keep excellent teachers now more than ever. You MUST honor their contract for the work we all expect them to do and their commitment to our community. All of their expenses will rise, including the health insurance which is provided via the BOE. They are the professionals that reach and teach our youth. Students are needing those connections now more than ever. We cannot risk cutting the programs that engage and support our students.</p> <p>It is early in this process. Even now, Congress is putting together a support package for states and cities. There will be money for the City in all of that.</p> <p>Practically, when school begins next school year, there will be many constraints, rules, and requirements to keep our students and teachers safe during this time. We will NOT need less teachers. We will need MORE.</p>

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	<p>We will need teachers who are dedicated and committed. Teachers who are not split between two jobs to take care of their own families. Teachers who can give our students their full attention. We have these teachers right now.</p> <p>It is imperative that you honor their contract, give them their raises, and keep all the teachers that give so much to our students, our families, and our communities.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p>
<p>Peter Hadley Music Teacher Stamford Public Schools</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance members,</p> <p>It is important to do everything possible to not cut the budget for education in Stamford. We need our teachers now more than ever. It is critical not to reduce the number of teachers. If safety demands that we reduce class size that means the teacher/student ratio needs to decrease. In other words, we will need more teachers, not less. We will also need more space too.</p> <p>It will be critical for the economy to expedite the return of students to in-person education to take child-care responsibilities away from parents so they can be freed up to go back to work. We also need to keep as many people as possible working. It is better for the city to go into debt in the short term to ensure the long term stability of the economy. Fully funding the BOE keeps people employed who in turn facilitate the ability of others (parents) to be available to be working.</p> <p>Please do not cut the Education budget.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>
<p>John Shaker 150 Southfield Ave Apt. 1148 Stamford, CT 06902</p>	<p>Dear Stamford Finance Board,</p> <p>I am a Stamford resident writing to inform you how essential and important Terry Connors Rink is to the Stamford and surrounding community at every age and gender. Terry Connors Rink has been a huge success and my family and personal story is just one example of that profound success.</p> <p>My son played for Darien High School Hockey Team and had many great games there. He broke his wrist playing for the Stamford Summer League team as well as playing youth hockey there for years.</p> <p>My daughter played on Darien High School hockey girls team and had several epic FCIAC and State Championship games at Terry Connors Rink against New Canaan High School and the Stamford teams as well. I have skated with the Darien Winter Club Hockey Team since 1992 at Terry Connors every Tuesday night. We are one of your longest and most loyal teams since the 1959's to play there. On another team, I have played Friday mornings at 10am from Labor day to June for the last 3 years at Terry Connors with a mixed group of gals and guys team. We are a devoted group and are a great use and example of how the rink brings people together when no one else would to rent the ice there.</p> <p>I know your rink management team well - Ken Smith and Lisa who have been great to work with always.</p>

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	<p>I have organized the Darien Winter Club Charity Skates for years at Terry Conners Rink. We have proudly raised \$75,000 for the Person to Person Charity which has primarily served the Stamford community over the last 20 years.</p> <p>Those are some amazing memories that are close to our hearts and the community. Terry Conners does so much good – more than many other causes that Stamford funds for the community. Stamford residents need to exercise. To get out, to interact and have fun. It wasn't many years ago that Terry Conners almost added a second rink on the property.</p> <p>There is a clear need for the Stamford community to continue operating what has been an extremely successful enterprise serving the Stamford community and residents for decades including the young, middle aged and senior citizens.</p> <p>To stop running the Terry Conners rink would be a regretful and short term decision to make. You can be assured that within 4 -5 years, Stamford will decide, it needs a rink there again but it will be very expensive to start it back up. It works, it serves the community, and is a very diverse offering Stamford provides its citizens. It should be celebrated, not cut back or eliminated. What a great thing Terry Conners rink has been for the Stamford Community. You don't want to be responsible for making a bad kneejerk decision in a tough financial spot that you will regret for many years after the fact. Its one of the good things in the community that pays for itself in many ways, not just dollars.</p> <p>Do the right thing, let Terry Conners be, it's the best ice rink and best ice with the most seats for championship games in all of Fairfield County. I think Stamford should be congratulated for running a first class rink in every way in its city. Thank you for that!</p> <p>Respectfully,</p>
<p>Maria Pizzarello</p>	<p>To the members of the Board of Finance,</p> <p>My name is Maria Pizzarello and I am a resident in Springdale with two young children just starting out in the Public Schools.</p> <p>I am writing to urge you not to cut the Education Budget. Our teachers, administrators and staff have gone above and beyond to try to maintain our children's education through out this world-wide health crisis. On a dime, they transitioned from formal classroom education to e-learning. They are on all day and respond to our children's questions and needs.</p> <p>When school finally does return to the classroom, their tenacity will be tested again as students coming from all walks of life reacclimatize to being in school. This has been a stressful time for children of all learning abilities. All hands will need to be on deck for when we bring them back together. We cannot lose interventionists, media specialists, and support staff. These specialists are integral to a schools function.</p> <p>If there is a pay freeze, we may lose some of our best teachers to neighboring districts. If we do not have the</p>

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	<p>best teachers, families will begin to leave Stamford. There is already a mistrust in the handling of our school facilities due to the mold issue in our buildings. Give our children the staff they need and in buildings that are safe.</p> <p>There is the saying, "I know who you are by who your friends are and how you spend your money." Spend our tax dollars on our children and their education. It is an investment in the future of Stamford.</p> <p>Thank you~</p>
<p>Eli Williams 203 667-6799 Enos66@aol.com</p>	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>My name is Eli Williams, I am a former player, coach, and employee of Terry Conners Ice Rink. I am concerned as I have recently found out that Terry Conners Ice Rink may shut down this year.</p> <p>Why is it that year in and year out Terry Conners has always been subject to budget cuts? Speaking strictly from a pure analytical standpoint I find it absolutely absurd. Terry Conners has as far as I'm aware been in the positive fiscally for well over 20 plus years. That includes its yearly shutdown that lasts almost a month or more at times. It employs 5 full time employees and as many as 15 or more part time employees.</p> <p>In times, such as the current outside environment, places like Terry Conners Ice Rink are desperately needed and should be beacons of hope for the community, which is exactly what Terry Conners Ice Rink has been since I was kid back in the 80's.</p> <p>I understand budget cuts must happen from time to time, I get the reality of economic hardship on the government, but as a business man myself I don't understand why you would take funds away from something that actually makes money year in and year out for the city??? I also understand that you can trim some fat here and there, but to cut the budget seems extreme and a little ridiculous. There is plenty of other places to cut spending in the city, to me, a facility that makes money, employs 20 plus local citizens, and can be a beacon of hope in a time of pandemic crisis my thought is to do whatever it takes to keep TCR open and let it help light the way out of these harsh economic and unstable times.</p> <p>I appreciate your time and understanding, and hope the board can find a way to be economically sound and use TCR as the asset it can and always has been.</p> <p>Regards,</p>
<p>Scott Jones</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance,</p> <p>My wife and I are both teachers in Stamford, but I write to you as a Stamford resident with a toddler that will inevitably enter the public school system. My wife and I are several months into the process of looking for a new home to buy. Our search has been limited to the City of Stamford, because we love the beautifully diverse neighborhoods, the entertainment, and...oh, the restaurants!</p> <p>But then we saw what could happen to the Stamford Public Schools if this \$15 million dollar budget cut is</p>

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	<p>mandated. None of the choices is acceptable. The loss of support staff, the loss of services for children, classrooms filled beyond capacity, the reduction of sports, art and technology, far fewer class choices, far more disgruntled, overworked, underpaid teachers...it's too horrific a picture to think about. Under no circumstances would we want our daughter growing up in a city that does not value its school system. As a resident, I would rather pay a little bit more in taxes to stave off this nightmare.</p> <p>Needless to say, our home search has now extended to any area but Stamford. And I have a feeling that property values and taxes would continue to fall all around as more people begin to learn about the decimation of the Stamford School system. I hope that you don't contribute to this possible reality.</p>
<p>Tara Wilcox</p>	<p>My name is Tara Wilcox. I am a Stamford resident, parent of Stamford school children and also a Librarian/Media Specialist at Strawberry Hill School (an extension of Rogers Magnet). All of these roles make me a stakeholder in this community. I am very concerned with plans to make drastic cuts to our education budget.</p> <p>As a Librarian/Media Specialist, I have contact with every student at my school. I provide a safe space filled with diverse literature and teach the technology skills that our students need now more than ever. Hearing that there are plans to reduce the Library/Media Staff in the High School and Middle Schools is very troubling. I have spoken out more than once as to the reasons why our positions are essential at our schools, yet I have never heard one reason why we are NOT essential. I can only assume that our job description is not clear. We are responsible for literacy, technology, professional development, purchasing, copyright adherence, and teaching 21st century literacy skills. Being responsible for all of those tasks means that we are available students and staff to turn to when they need support, no matter what their need.</p> <p>I can't imagine students returning to a school where the Library doors are locked. Our students and staff have depended on us during this difficult time and we have been there for them. They will need us just as much, if not more when we return to school.</p> <p>Please show our schools, our staff, and most importantly, our students, that you care enough about them to provide them with the high quality of education that they deserve.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Jackie Giuliano Media Specialist Davenport Ridge Elementary School</p>	<p>Board of Finance and Board of Education members,</p> <p>I'm writing to you as a lifelong Stamford resident, graduate of Stamford Public Schools, mother of 2 sons who graduated from Stamford Public Schools and a Stamford Public School teacher. My ties to this city go back 3 generations and I've never had the urge to leave here. Stamford is my home and I'm proud to be a member of the teaching force in this great city.</p> <p>That being said, it is disheartening to read the proposed cuts outlined in the BOE budget. As a Media</p>

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	<p>Specialist, this is not the first time my job has been affected. When our media paras were temporarily cut, we did the best we could working extra hours to get our job done, often foregoing our unassigned time and taking a 10 minute lunch, just to keep our heads above water. We did it without extra compensation. But we did it for the kids. The media center suffered, we suffered and the students suffered. Now our jobs are on the line for the second time. How schools are supposed to function without Media Specialists in the middle and high schools is beyond comprehension. The only explanation is that the people making these decisions have no idea what our days look like. We are a necessary resource for students and teachers. Everyone likes to say that the Media Center is the hub of the schools. How can you believe this to be true when you want to take away the leader of that hub? I find the constant need to defend my job depressing and exhausting.</p> <p>I'm not just writing to defend the Media Specialists in the city, but all teachers. The list of proposed cuts is shocking. When this crisis hit, teachers did the impossible in 2 days. We created Google classrooms, learned new software, put home classrooms together, gathered materials, bought new material (with our own money, as we often do), reached out to students, parents and colleagues. I was able to sign up for many free resources such as e-books, Brainpop and Nearpod and share the information with the teachers in my building. This was not all done within our 7 hour work day. We worked, and are still working early hours, late nights and weekends. We do it for the kids. We do it without extra compensation.</p> <p>When we return to work in the fall, our jobs will be even more difficult. We will be dealing with children who are behind academically, children who haven't been in a structured school setting in a very long time, children who have suffered loss and trauma in their personal lives, children who will need extra support emotionally, socially and academically. We will do it because it's for the kids. But we cannot do it without the proper resources. Cutting staff and increasing class size is not going to allow us to provide the help to our students that they will desperately need. We spend our lives giving and doing for the kids, but we cannot do it alone. I realize the economic situation that we are in, but surely there's another solution. Asking us to do all of this, not only without extra compensation, but taking a cut in salary is not acceptable. Yes, we are in this for the kids, but we are also human beings who have our own families, our own expenses, our own hardships and traumas that we are dealing with. Please take this all into consideration.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Respectfully, Christine Porfilio Instructional Support Teacher (K-5) at K.T. Murphy</p>	<p align="right">May 18, 2020</p> <p>Dear Board of Finance, Good evening and thank you for allowing teachers, families and members of the community an opportunity to speak and voice their concerns regarding the proposed cuts to the Board of Education's budget. As a Stamford resident and taxpayer for the past 5 years, as well as the only Instructional Support Teacher at K.T. Murphy Elementary School, I am extremely upset and angered by ALL seven options presented to the SEA to make up</p>

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<p>Submitted by: Ellen Suarino</p>	<p>for the \$15 million deficit to the budget. It's a disgrace that during this unprecedented time when teachers are the "heroes" in our community, that WE are the ones being forced to make an unfair decision – to deal with possible position and program cuts or endure salary freezes for the next two years. As one of only 2 reading teachers at K.T. Murphy, we have worked tirelessly and "harder-than ever," to ensure that all students at our school, especially those receiving SRBI intervention and are not proficient in reading, are continuously engaged and receiving daily live instruction in reading and phonics. We have worked relentlessly, for the past 8 weeks of distance learning, sometimes till 11 pm at night to create google slides, activities, games and to prepare lessons for our students. We have differentiated instruction and have coached and co-taught with our classroom teachers to ensure that all students are getting exceptional instruction at home and would undoubtedly continue to make progress and not regress during their time at home. Moreover, we have spent countless hours reaching out to students and their parents to "check-in" and help them navigate the incredibly complicated technology utilized. We have unselfishly done all of this because we love our jobs and our students!! Nevertheless, we have been overjoyed by their unbounding support and are very appreciative of the hard work that teachers and administrators are doing during this most difficult of times. Please realize that these unnecessary cuts would be devastating to them as well as all members of the Stamford community. I beg you to reconsider and to use the \$14 million surplus from last year and money from federal funding and/or the CARES act to fund the operating budget so that teachers, students and their families, are not penalized for Covid-19. Instead, let's allow our teachers to continue to be the "heroes" in our community and praise them for all of their diligence and hard work during this most vulnerable of times.</p>
<p>Brook Manewal</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance members I am writing with regard to the current budget crisis and proposed cuts. I implore you to look outside of our schools for cost saving ideas. Our students have born the burden of the Covid-19 crisis, both emotionally and intellectually. Despite parents' best efforts, they have inevitably fallen behind in their learning, lost the structure and support that school supplies and will return to school, whenever that may be, needier than ever before. Our youngest children are most vulnerable. To suggest cutting paras in lower grades when many children will need one on one attention to get back up to speed is a non-starter. I am sure that there are many other places in the city budget, that can be a resource for funding. I suggest our highest civil wage earners agree to a temporary pay cut, or contract give-backs. Many of our residents have been laid off, furloughed, fired or otherwise unable to collect an income for several months. Yet there are many city employees making more than \$200,000 per year who have survived this pandemic economically unscathed. There are many city services that people take for granted such as leaf removal that</p>

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	<p>could be suspended for a year, or altered in a more cost efficient fashion. I also have the unpopular opinion that the mill rate should be adjusted, especially for properties valued in excess of \$1,000,000. There is too much wealth in our amazing city for our schools to be struggling as they are. Lastly, we could also look to local businesses to help, and expand our grant writing department to seek more contributions from private benefactors. The school budget always seems to be the first stop when looking to save money. In my opinion, it should be a last resort. Cutting staff, supplies and resources for our students is not the answer.</p> <p>Best regards,</p>
<p>Heysha</p>	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>I'm writing to show my support for the educators in Stamford. I have been a teacher in the district for 7 years, this year has been by far the most difficult. Next year will have even more challenges. Our students are suffering now as we try to adjust to this "normal" but next year we will face a tougher challenge as we try to meet the needs of students who have not had adequate access to education despite the district's efforts to provide it.</p> <p>It is unfair and unfortunate that the idea of taking money away from our schools' budget is even being brought up. Our students need and deserve the best this city can provide. My colleagues and I go above and beyond to meet the students engage the families so they can be successful. Please do not approve a budget cut that would so greatly impact the quality of education and life among students and staff.</p> <p>Kind Regards,</p>
<p>ab mcnichols <abmcnichols666@gmail.com></p>	<p>Another board member, Kieran Ryan, asked Martin to explore whether the city can create an authority to run the rink, similar to the Water Pollution Control Authority that operates the sewage system.</p> <p>That's a joke, right? The WPCA is a model of a bloated, broken mismanaged entity.</p> <p>Payroll, benefits and pensions across the board in this town is the only cure for what ails Stamford.</p>
<p>Linda Kopel Realtor at William Raveis Real Estate</p>	<p>As a mother and grandmother and former teacher and currently a realtor I cannot stress enough how important it is to not eliminate positions in the school system. A school without media specialists? Paraprofessionals? Maintenance workers? How will our schools continue to grow? Don't forget reading specialists or speech pathologists! Our children are our most important members of our society. Don't take away needed programs and services.</p>
<p>Robyn Spinner Newfield</p>	<p>Good evening. My name is Robyn Spinner, and I am a physical education and health teacher at Newfield Elementary School. I am unable to personally speak tonight, but I wanted my voice to be heard. I have been fortunate enough to be a teacher with the Stamford Public Schools since 2005. Stamford teachers are working</p>

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tirelessly to provide stability and distance learning in a very unexpected, scary and chaotic time. Nobody could have ever dreamt up a global pandemic like this in any other setting other than in a Hollywood movie! Yet, somehow - like we always seem to do - Stamford teachers have once again stepped up their game. We have been the driving force behind Phase 1 and 2, executing every detail as we've been asked ...and then some. During this very trying time, many of us have put our own needs, and the needs of our families on the back burner, as we ensure that the learning, social and emotional needs of our students are being met. We have and continue to give it our all.

As we move toward the end of the academic year, and as we continue to bring Stamford Public Schools to an exceptional level of Distance Learning, we are suddenly informed that a 2-year pay freeze is what may be best for the city in terms of saving money. While I understand that a budget has to be met, meeting it by hurting those who have done the district proud isn't the way to accomplish this.

It recently appears that specialists teachers (such as Physical Education, Music, Art and Media) have now been added to the chopping block. This is the time when our students need more support and funding, not less. Eliminating any specialist positions at any level of our schools would be catastrophic to our students, their learning, their social/emotional needs, and their safety.

Students need to return to their schools - their safe place - with their support and teachers intact. Specialists teachers are a huge part of this support team. Students who may not thrive academically, often times shine in their specials classes. We help our students to find their hidden talents and capabilities. We help our students to find their confidence and their voice. Ultimately, we help our students to find themselves. So, what does this all mean? It means that every single specialist teacher in the Stamford Public Schools is necessary and essential for the continued success of our district. This means fewer students being in a gym, on a stage, in an art studio, and in a media center must stay a priority. Our students need continued support in their specials classes. They will not have that support if our specialists' staff is reduced.

Furthermore, physical education teachers are required to administer the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment to all students in grades 4, 6, 8, and once between grades 9-12. These state assessment results then become a part of the standardized testing equation for each school - as well as the Stamford Public Schools as a whole. Eliminating any physical education teacher jobs inevitably means a lesser quality program for our students. This potentially puts our district at risk of not meeting and exceeding these critical benchmarks.

When the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly hit, Stamford teachers pushed forward and we soared. We educated ourselves on new learning platforms - many which none of us had ever heard of before. And we never looked back. We did it because it was the right thing to do. We did it because we care about our students, and truly love our jobs. We did it because regardless of what is going on in the background, we always put children first. We did it because we know we can make a difference from anywhere and through any learning platform. We

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	<p>did it because we are Stamford Public Schools teachers, and we are the best. And we deserve the best back from our Board of Finance.</p> <p>I respectfully ask that Stamford Public Schools teachers’ jobs stay intact, and that our salaries reflect what we as teachers have shown over these trying times - and all of the time. We always rise to the occasion ...and our salaries should continue to reflect that.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Bass, Tracey <TBass@StamfordCT.gov></p>	<p>Good evening, My name is Tracey Bass and I am a proud teacher at Stamford High school asking that the Board of Finance for an Education friendly budget! Your proposed cuts will negatively impact students, their families and our schools!.</p>
<p>Darren J. Stec</p>	<p>Good evening Stamford Board of Finance members, parents, and colleagues–,</p> <p>My name is Darren Stec, and I am the instrumental music teacher for 4th and 5th grade at both Northeast and Stillmeadow Elementary Schools. I have been teaching in Stamford Public Schools since 2004. In the 16 years I have been here, teachers have faced numerous challenges which include, but are not limited to, the following: Multiple salary step freezes, straight salary freezes, lockdown drills, shelter in place/evacuation drills, mold infested buildings, dwindling budgets for resources, additional standardized testing requirements, increases of pension contributions, increases for health plan contributions, and reduced staffing at multiple schools particularly in the areas of art, physical education and music.</p> <p>How did the teachers react? They did their jobs! They worked even harder because of their tireless work ethic that our students require. They did it over and over again, with less resources, paying out of their own pocket and with overwhelming bureaucratic obstacles. They learned how to completely overhaul their vocation into distance learning. Phys Ed teachers are somehow managing to organize virtual Field Days, Paras are supporting Classroom teachers, and Media Specialists have somehow developed into a hybrid of Literacy expert/IT department. These are only a few examples – if you speak to an administrator, you would already know there are dozens and dozens more.</p> <p>How did the parents react? Overwhelmingly, parents have given enthusiastic reviews to the teachers. The level of cooperation has been nothing less than astounding. They have also been volunteering their resources and time.</p> <p>How did others react? They proposed budget cuts to the very people who have worked non-stop through ridiculous odds without one single complaint. The result would inevitably dismantle subjects, departments, morale and exponentially worse outcomes for our students. They did it without waiting until the end of Teacher Appreciation week. They did it while in the middle of a negotiated existing contract. We kept our word to the letter, and went above and beyond without extra pay, less sleep, and increased stress. We are</p>

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	<p>hoping that City of Stamford can keep its word as well.</p> <p>The word “unprecedented” has been used quite a lot lately as in “These are unprecedented times”, but in terms of our vocation, the way teachers have been treated in Stamford has multiple precedents. Year after year, we are asked to “do more with less”, but offer even more services. We are given additional testing requirements, but no additional prep time. We are asked change our profession in less than 48 hours, in our home, and on our equipment, with no additional salary increase. To see if you could get a salary freeze and reduce positions at this time in history even just one more time is beyond comprehension. Our children and students deserve better than this.</p> <p>Thank you for your time,</p>
Sue Dwyer	<p>Good Afternoon,</p> <p>I am a parent of two Stamford Public School students, a member of our Elementary School's PTO Board and an active member of our community. We have recently learned of the proposed budget cuts for the next fiscal year and there are many aspects of the proposal which are concerning to us as parents of Stamford Public School children.</p> <p>A more obvious reason to all of us is the seamless transition from "in school" learning to "distance learning" in a 24 hour period. Both of my children's schools reacted immediately to the drastic change and my children never missed a moment of school and learning from the very first day, Friday March 13, 2020. Each of my children's teachers, whether a core subject or a special, has stepped up beyond what was expected to ensure that our children have continued to receive instruction and assignments, including new material. The vehicle in which these teachers had to communicate to our children was not used by all teachers at this point, so not only did the teacher's have to change the format in how they were teaching, but they had to learn how to teach, how to use the system with little to no time to prepare or train. However, again, they didn't miss a beat. My kids had and have had every single day since March 12, 2020, a full day of learning on multiple subjects. And it is not one teacher doing more than another. The special teachers are "teaching" new material as well as the core courses.</p> <p>In addition to the issue of enabling a pay cut to the teacher's salaries, we have a huge concern with the elimination of several positions that are imperative to the well being and education of our children. I have son with an IEP, which is a Federal document that ensures that my son's education is met in adherence with his learning needs. This is in support of FAPE, the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) an educational right of all students in the United States that is guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). My child has a learning disability. Does that mean my child doesn't have a right to an education that is appropriate for him to learn? If my child had diabetes, would we not supply him with insulin to ensure he wouldn't go into sugar shock? If you remove the support system built into our schools</p>

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	<p>currently you are lessening the chance of kids with disabilities being given an appropriate education. Parents of children with disabilities are very versed in their federal rights associated with this and I can guarantee that this will not go down quietly on our front.</p> <p>A few years ago we were considering moving from Stamford because we were concerned with Middle School and High School in Stamford. We consulted with several educational advocates to find a town or city whose school system supported all types of learners. We were told to stay put. Stamford has an excellent special education system and is supported by the Board of Education and Administration. You won't find this kind of support in surrounding towns. Your best bet is to stay here. So we did. For 1.5 years we tried two private schools for my son, and were not getting the support that we needed, and decided to bring him back to Stamford Public Schools because we felt confident he would get what he needs, and he is. Other families have kept their children in our school system for the same reason or are moving them out of private schools to our public for this very reason. We are a city that is known for supporting our children, all of our children, why change this now when these kids need it so much more, and will continue to need it as we all navigate these uncertain times. To me this doesn't make much sense and I would expect a group of very educated and intelligent people to understand that and support that. More importantly I would expect this group to support the children.</p> <p>It is completely understandable that our city has suffered great economic loss and changes and cuts will need to be made. I don't think anyone will argue this fact with you. What is crucial right now is that a quick solution with irreparable consequences is not made. A long term outlook is needed here. Making cuts to a critical workforce in our city is not the solution. Yes some cuts will need to be made, but certainly there are other places that the BOF can also look at. It is a very difficult, and I don't take away the horrible situation you've been put in to make these decisions, and we truly thank you for your service. If there is anyway we can look to make smaller cuts across several workforces to help close the gap the impact may be felt less and the outcome for those ultimately affected could be much less in one specific area.</p> <p>Please consider revising your proposal to the budget cuts for Stamford Public Schools, the impact it will have on all children, the long term economic impact it will have on real estate with school ratings, the turnover and loss of trusted, hardworking teachers who cannot live on the salaries we would be giving them and the loss of imperative support positions who have given Stamford the reputation it currently has for a caring and productive school system.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
Jim Forde 6h Grade Tech Tchr Scofield MMS	To the Board of Finance, Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on the proposed cuts to the 2020-2021 school budget.

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<p>jforde@stamfordct.gov twitter --> @mrfordetech</p>	<p>As a veteran Stamford educator I have been invested in public education in Stamford since the early 90's. My two children attended SPS K-12. It helped them become principle-centered capable adults. My daughter is on the front line as a 23 year old ER Nurse at Bridgeport Hospital and my son is now an Optometrist who has already started giving back by providing services to Philadelphia PS kids at the school based clinic. (Go Vikings) We have been blessed to be associated with what the Stamford Public Schools represents, a commitment to making a difference in the lives of all of our diverse students....like my own two kids.... and to helping them reach their full potential. Mind, Heart and Body.</p> <p>At this extraordinarily challenging moment it is not to the time to affect massive cuts to our schools. In my opinion, this is the rainy day of all rainy days. As such, I suggest that some of those available funds be utilized to greatly soften the sting of this budgetary crisis.</p> <p>Asking schools to absorb a massive cut that will result in the loss of key positions, at a time when they will be most needed, is not appropriate. It is also not the time to have salary freezes or cuts to those willing to do this important work on behalf of Stamford families.</p> <p>Social distancing, alternate hybrid scheduling, continued and improved distance learning strategies, and continuing to provide the social and nutritional safety will require all hands on deck at SPS. The work that we will be doing is key to the complete re-opening of our community and should be seen as such.</p> <p>I guarantee you. As a staff, we are up to the challenge. Very little scares a veteran Middle School teacher (☺), but we need your support.</p> <p>We are definitely in a crisis, but like most crises, it is also an opportunity. Who we are will be reflected in this budget. Are we committed to helping our educational system be successful? Do we care about our kids and educators in Stamford facing this head on? Are we willing to face the coming realities of a post-covid educational system head-on? This is the opportunity to show the state and nation who Stamford really is.</p> <p>Thank you again for allowing me to share my opinion, for your commitment to Stamford and for your willingness to lead on this issue on our behalf.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted.</p>
<p>Aileen O'Sullivan</p>	<p>To the Board of Finance,</p> <p>As a parent of 3 Stamford Public School students and an involved member of the greater Stamford community, I am addressing you over the allocation of funds.</p> <p>The proposed cuts to the school system, especially in a time of such uncertainty, goes against so many core beliefs that we as city and a school community value. These proposed cuts impact the most vulnerable and take advantage of the professionalism and outstanding effort of our educators. To cut funding to the arts, to those students who need paraprofessionals, to social workers who manage not only our student needs, but the needs of their families is a short-term decision that will have lasting long-term effects.</p>

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	<p>Now is the time to think big, to move beyond what we have done in the past and make bold decisions for the future of our city and our schools. You have the ability to decide how we proceed at pivotal, unprecedented time in our country and our city's history and the ability to allocate funds to an educational system that serves as a safe haven for all children. A system that nurtures, influences and educates our youth and provides them with guidance and support, in the midst of a pandemic or not.</p> <p>As a Stamford resident, I urge you to invest in our schools and our teachers, especially in a time of so many unknowns.</p> <p>Best,</p>
<p>Lina Quintero Newfield School Parent</p>	<p>Hello.</p> <p>My name is Lina Quintero, my daughter Sofia attends Newfield school and she's in 5th grade. Mrs. Scott has been her reading teacher as part of an after school program for children who are struggling with reading and writing. The change and progress I have seen in my daughter has been tremendous and I owe it to this particular program. Having it cut will affect not only my daughter but other children who could benefit from it. Please consider not to remove the program from your budget as it will affect not only the individual children but the school as a whole too.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
<p>Alexa Eisenberg (Davenport and Rippowam parent)</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance,</p> <p>I am writing to show my support in finding any other possible places to cut the budget, other than the Stamford Public Schools. Our children and our schools will need all the support they can get once the kids are back in the classroom. It is no secret that school quality affects so much more than the students and their families - real estate value as well is so closely linked to school performance.</p> <p>I will keep this brief as I am squeezing this letter writing in between helping my 3 kids get through their at home learning day - I am sure there are many letters that are more convincing with better talking points, but I wanted to add my voice to support our schools!</p> <p>Hope you are all well.</p> <p>All the best,</p>
<p>Brittany Summa 4th Grade Teacher – Davenport Ridge</p>	<p>May 18, 2020</p> <p>Dear Board of Finance Members, Board of Education Members and Administrators, Board of Representatives, and Mayor Martin,</p> <p>Hello, thank you for the opportunity to speak and have a voice. My name is Brittany Summa; I am an elementary school teacher at Davenport. I was born and raised in Stamford and in the Stamford Public Schools'</p>

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system. I recently sold my condo and purchased a single-family home here in Stamford and it is truly eye opening just how expensive it is to live here as a single person. It is insulting and disheartening as a resident and teacher that you would even consider significantly cutting the educational budget. Teachers are the real reason school systems work. If it was not for us there would be no distance learning taking place. There are days I am up from 8:00 AM until 2:00 AM the next morning, working, spending money, finding online resources, creating resources, and planning to provide adequate distance learning and experiences for my kids (and yes, I consider them my kids, not just my students). The same goes during the regular school year. All we hear is work within your contractual hours and take time to focus on your mind, body, and heart, but at times it is almost near impossible with the work load begin added onto our shoulders almost daily. It seems teachers are always asked to do so much more for less and less.

Stamford promotes “Mind, Body, Heart”, though it seems none of that is even a thought right now at all. When I decided to become a teacher, it was to make a difference in children’s lives, not for money. That being said we need to make money to live and survive just like anyone else. Many teachers have to work second or even third jobs just to get the slightest bit ahead, never mind trying to live and survive in Stamford as a resident which is nearly impossible for many. Also disheartening is the lack of support teachers seem to have from basically all directions. You hear on the news and on social media how teachers are going above and beyond during these unprecedented times, how we are hero’s as well, and how we need more respect and better pay to continue to efficiently teach our youth, and now the response to that is to cut the education budget, cut teaching positions, and heavy handedly ask teachers to voluntarily take a pay freeze? That is just incomprehensible.

I understand Board of ed members have agreed to a two year pay freeze, which is nice, but if we are being transparent here, they also make six figure salaries, some reaching nearly \$300,000 or more, they will not feel that as much as teachers making significantly less would. In other career fields, individuals would be able to make up the loss from a pay freeze by working overtime, teachers don’t get overtime, as a matter of fact we barely get the recognition we truly deserve for the endless extra hours we work past our contractual hours, all for the benefit of our kids and colleagues. This also coming soon after I, and many other teachers have worked hard and paid a great deal of money to receive master’s degrees and sixth year degrees to become better in our field, only to get knocked back down. When are people going to open their eyes and start to truly respect, appreciate, support, and realize teacher’s worth? This is absolutely not the time to be taking money from us or cutting any positions in the education field, if anything it is a time to be reallocating funds FOR us. So, I respectfully ask you to strongly reconsider and vote against cutting funds for education, which will only hurt educators, children, their families, and the Stamford community in the end.

Respectfully,

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<p>Gail Rosenthal</p>	<p>Good Evening, My name is Gail Rosenthal and I am a Reading teacher at Roxbury Elementary. We understand that the Board of Finance is considering potential budget cuts which could involve the elimination of a number of reading positions. While we understand the need for careful evaluation of budgetary matters during these unprecedented times, we would respectfully submit that there will be an even greater need for reading instruction when classes resume in the fall. Therefore, now is not the time to cut back these reading positions. Reading is the fundamental building block of a complete education. Without a solid foundation of reading skills, elementary students will lag behind in all of their other studies throughout their young lives and never achieve to their fullest potential. This need for reading assistance for many of our underachieving and underprivileged students has already been exacerbated by the lack of classroom instruction during the last three months of the current school year. It is an established fact that the neediest students benefit from remedial reading instruction and they will suffer the most if they receive reduced reading help. Ct. will soon receive 111 million from the federal government for our schools. Of that 111 million, 2.7 million will go to Stamford public schools. Why wouldn't part of that 2.7 million be used to fund these important positions? Our kids have already been through enough academically and emotionally this year. Taking away their support system would only make the achievement gap wider. Is this what you want for the students of Stamford? We, the reading teachers of Stamford, are, and always have been, essential teachers. Please don't cut Reading teachers!</p>
<p>Ruth Letson</p>	<p>Members of the Boards of Finance and Education, I am writing to voice my concern over the budget proposal for the Stamford Board of Education for 2020-2021. The proposed cuts are draconian and will cause irreparable harm to the students of the Stamford Public Schools. This proposed budget undermines the value of living in Stamford. It is a fact that families choose to live in districts with well funded excellent public schools and that a good school district increases property values. As a Media Specialist at Westhill High School, I am particularly concerned about the proposed cuts to Media Centers. You probably all know that Media Specialists teach research skills to students and staff - in the Media Center and in classrooms, maintain a robust collection of electronic and print materials for academic research and leisure reading, provide technological support with both software and hardware, and offer various services including laminating, printing -- color and b&w, poster making, and so forth. You may also know that the Media Center specialists are available before and after school. Before the first bell rings from 150 to 200 students come in to print, finish homework, or just sit with some friends. After the school, students come to complete homework, use the 3D printer, provide tutoring for peers, hold club meetings, or just decompress. Without a Media Specialist present, all services are not available to all who need them before or after school.</p>

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	<p>You may not know that the Media Center is THE safe haven for many students at Westhill. Anxiety is real. Students with permanent passes come to the Media Center when sitting in a class is too hard -- this can be for many reasons and we do not question the students. We just know they have permission to be there and are happy to see them and provide any support we can. The Guidance Counselors have told me that our support is what gets many students through the day. You may not know I have worked with an English teacher to identify students who are strong readers. As a Media Specialist I discuss books with the students -- I read books that they recommend and students read what I recommend. With information I gathered from casual conversations an English teacher and I were able to help some shy students blossom -- we secured positions in more demanding English classes and they rose to meet the challenge. The insight I provided was invaluable. I know because the students told me so. Also you may not know that cutting a Media Specialist position at Westhill could be reason for the school to lose its accreditation with NEASC. NEASC recommends that a secondary school have at least one Media Specialist for every 1000 students. Westhill has over 2000 students. I love my job and know that my colleagues do as well -- every teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, speech therapist... I know is diligent. We all provide different kinds of support and instruction to help all of our students do their very best. Certainly the elimination of my position is catastrophic for me. But, the elimination of any of these positions is drastic for all.</p> <p>Please find a way to preserve our education budget.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
<p>Laurie Bouris</p>	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am the mother of two children who are currently in 2nd and 4th grade at Davenport Ridge Elementary school. I don't necessarily know the specifics on the suggested financial cuts to the BOE but I do know that it is most certainly going to affect my special needs son. Brody is in the fourth grade and has been with Stamford Public schools since pre k at Apples. He has thrived BECAUSE of the services and amazing facility at these schools. In the current climate it was my understanding that people were seeing our teachers and support staff as essential employees. It seemed they were finally being recognized for their hard work and impact on the world. The only outcome that should be discussed tonight is how to increase the BOE budget. Your job right now is to resolve where you can cut to increase our faculty so when September hits these teams are able to provide assistance to help those children who have fallen behind, have suffered emotionally, and in creating a safer environment for our children.</p> <p>Thank you for your understanding.</p>
<p>Laurie Bouris <lbouris@hotmail.com></p>	<p>Hello,</p> <p>With the Covid-19, shouldn't we have less students in our classroom - not more - so the students are spaced</p>

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	<p>farther apart? Joan</p>
<p>Kelly Batzios, Co-President Tracie Dinc, Co-President Amy Notter, Co-Vice President Kim Schenck, Co-Vice President Jana Henderson, Co-Treasurer Ramya Shaw, Co-Treasurer Hart Magnet Elementary School PTO</p>	<p>Dear Members of the Board of Finance, We represent the PTO Board of Hart Magnet School. As parents, taxpayers and active participants in our children’s schools, we urge you to approve the full budget that Dr Lucero is requesting. Our school children are among the most vulnerable citizens of this city, as they are still growing and learning—socially and emotionally, as well as academically. Reducing the proposed budget puts the safety, health and welfare of our children at risk. We absolutely can not cut critical staff and services, especially now, when our children need more support than ever! Eliminating foundational literacy programs risks their future learning capabilities. Reducing social service staff undermines our efforts to create a safe, welcoming environment for our entire community. Undervaluing employees risks the flight of our best teachers and staff to other opportunities. It goes without saying, increased maintenance in our buildings is absolutely critical. Our children are Stamford’s future homeowners, entrepreneurs, corporate partners and civic leaders. We need them to be educated properly. Furthermore, the quality of our school system has a major impact on the success of our city. Current and prospective home buyers often unfairly avoid Stamford due to the reputation of our public schools. Refusing to fully fund the school budget will only exacerbate that problem and further depress tax revenues. Stamford citizens *must* rally around our students and schools and provide the full amount requested for the coming year. Sincerely,</p>
<p>Stark School Sarah Santasiero IST K-2 Reading Teacher Courtney Simon B.O.E Reading Teacher Stacey Wood IST 3-5 Reading Teacher</p>	<p>It is March 3, 2020; for all intensive purposes, a normal school year. Reading intervention is going as planned. There are data collections on a daily basis, Literacy How inserting the most up to date reading research practices which are evident throughout the school. Both ELL and non-ELL students alike are receiving one form of Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention across grades K-5 from our B.O.E reading teacher, IST K-2, and IST 3-5 interventionists. Each interventionist fitting 6-8 groups into a normal school day. Every student comes identified by the Literacy Team, classroom teacher and SRBI coordinator with a personalized focus of instruction used by each intervention teacher to target their specific, small group instruction. In this particular school, the Literacy Team serves two roles. One is to evaluate student need, identify the student’s focus of instruction, then to plan and execute this instruction. The other role is to serve as the SRBI coordinator for the school and each identified student. Every 6-8 weeks they meet with classroom teachers and/or parents to discuss each student’s progress and to develop and track a plan of action. Are they on a trajectory to exit out of SRBI so that intervention is no longer needed? This is our goal. These are the supports provided by our</p>

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	<p>Interventionists and SRBI coordinators, some of us serving both roles at one time. How can we lay this work on our classroom teacher’s shoulders? By eliminating these positions we are losing the structure that we have created to support students before the special education process begins, the foundation of the Response To Intervention process so thoroughly infused into our education system in the past 15 years.</p> <p>It is September 2020; students have been without the secure structure of a formal school day. They are reentering this world with so many different home experiences and educational gains and losses. Teachers are motivated to take on their students however they arrive, they’ve been waiting for this day, but they can’t do it alone. Returning will be its own unprecedented event, but this time, they are without the expertise of the interventionists who in normal times, they have relied on. There is no doubt that there will be gaps in development that cannot be closed by one classroom teacher alone. When they have questions about their students, who will they consult with? When they need to submit paperwork for a student who is substantially deficient, whom will they turn to? When a student’s need is above and beyond a teacher’s daily small group work and data collection is proving the next tier is essential (in a classroom of 25 students), how will the student receive the extra tiered instruction by an expert in that area that is needed to further them towards their academic goals in these formidable elementary school years? As Joseph Torgesen explains in the article Avoiding the Devastating Downward Spiral, the skill deficit between average and below-average readers can be largely erased with appropriate early intervention. Research proves our intervention is absolutely essential. Let’s give our teachers and students what they need; not less as we navigate our school world once again.</p>
<p>Julie A. W. Fraser, Esq. and Kevin F. Fraser</p>	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>I was recently made aware of the Board of Finance's intention to cut the funding to the Stamford Public Schools by fifteen million dollars. I wanted to take a moment to voice my strenuous objection to a cut of this magnitude.</p> <p>My husband and I believe in the quality of education provided by the Stamford Public Schools. We supported this belief by choosing to continue to reside in Stamford two years ago when we purchased our second home in the city. The Stamford Public Schools epitomize the environment in which we want to raise our sons - rich in cultural and economic diversity while providing a strong education across many areas. We are both educated in the public school system and believe in the benefits of a public school education.</p> <p>Our children do not require additional educational supports at this point in time but we strongly feel that those supports much remain in place for the benefit of ALL students in the school system. Many of their friends need this extra assistance and, if this pandemic has shown anything, we as parents are ill equipped to provide the extra supports that are needed. To make cuts to the funding for the school system would negatively impact these supports and ALL families in the Stamford Public Schools. The time and energy of the classroom teachers are divided enough without having larger classes and to provide more assistance to those students who</p>

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	<p>previously received academic supports.</p> <p>Additionally, as a past PTO president in Stamford, I can personally vouch for the fact that the schools already don't have the funding they need to support their students. The PTOs routinely provide funding for field trips, school supplies, enrichment activities and even food and clothing for the children who are food and housing insecure. I've seen firsthand how the parents of Stamford rise to the occasion to support families in need. If the PTO has to make up the proposed funding cuts, those families in need will likely go without.</p> <p>These last few months have been difficult enough for our children without school and with the adjustment to distance learning. They will be returning to a greatly different school reality as it stands. The Board of Finance proposal makes cuts when the schools need additional funding to make our schools safe again, both from mold and from COVID-19 and would therefore have a far greater impact per dollar than in so-called "normal" times. I would simply ask that you reconsider the magnitude of this cut and impact it will have not only on the schools as a whole but on the individual families in Stamford and the education and welfare of our children.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Sara Sherlock Karbel</p>	<p>Dear Board of Finance -</p> <p>I am writing this letter as an SPS parent of two children and PTO member at Davenport Ridge Elementary. Our teachers go above and beyond every day. These past few months have only proven that Stamford's school community is filled with passionate and hard-working teachers and staff. I have never been prouder to be a member of the SPS community. Our teachers should be praised, supported, and appropriately compensated. My children have been able to thrive in these uncertain and unprecedented times knowing their school is there to support them and that includes the entire staff.</p> <p>Please reconsider these cuts.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and your service,</p>
<p>Rebecca Cabot</p> <p>Mom of a Strawberry Hill student</p>	<p>To Whom it May Concern:</p> <p>I was recently made aware of the Board of Finance's intention to cut the funding to the Stamford Public Schools by fifteen million dollars. I wanted to take a moment to voice my strenuous objection to a cut of this magnitude.</p> <p>I believe in the quality of education provided by the Stamford Public Schools. We supported this belief by choosing to continue to reside in Stamford when I purchased our home in the city. The Stamford Public Schools epitomize the environment in which we want to raise my child - rich in cultural and economic diversity while providing a strong education across many areas. I'm educated in the public school system and believe in the benefits of a public school education.</p> <p>My child does not require additional educational supports at this point in time but I strongly feel that those</p>

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	<p>supports much remain in place for the benefit of ALL students in the school system. Many of their friends need this extra assistance and, if this pandemic has shown anything, we as parents are ill equipped to provide the extra supports that are needed. To make cuts to the funding for the school system would negatively impact these supports and ALL families in the Stamford Public Schools. The time and energy of the classroom teachers are divided enough without having larger classes and to provide more assistance to those students who previously received academic supports.</p> <p>The schools already don't have the funding they need to support their students. The PTOs routinely provide funding for field trips, school supplies, enrichment activities and even food and clothing for the children who are food and housing insecure. I've seen firsthand how the parents of Stamford rise to the occasion to support families in need. If the PTO has to make up the proposed funding cuts, those families in need will likely go without.</p> <p>These last few months have been difficult enough for our children without school and with the adjustment to distance learning. They will be returning to a greatly different school reality as it stands. The Board of Finance proposal makes cuts when the schools need additional funding to make our schools safe again, both from mold and from COVID-19 and would therefore have a far greater impact per dollar than in so-called "normal" times. I would simply ask that you reconsider the magnitude of this cut and impact it will have not only on the schools as a whole but on the individual families in Stamford and the education and welfare of our children.</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
Rachele Ligi	<p>I am writing you in hopes that you will reconsider your thoughts on cutting an Athletic Director from our high school programs. As a Stamford High parent, I need you to know that Mr Passamano has made a huge positive change at our school and having our athletes and our student body lose that presence is just sad. Do any of you have children at our high schools? Do you know how much of an impact a positive administrator can have on these kids? Well HE has made a huge impact and the students trust him! Please tell me how this will not work if you decide to cut an AD, what if a student goes to say SHS and wants to have an in-person conversation with the AD, how is that possible if there is no AD in the building. How is ONE AD going to attend sporting events representing both school with no partiality? Passamano attends EVERYTHING he physically can for those kids, he is there to cheer them on, show the kids he cares! Its a safety issue if there isn't an AD in attendance when something goes wrong and I can bet you there will be favoritism If you allow one AD for both schools. Will the AD move to and from Westhill and Stamford splitting their time between both schools. How can they get to know anyone? You need to think of cutting another area as having two AD's in our two high schools is something that needs to stay!!!</p> <p>PLEASE DO NOT CUT THE POSITION THAT CHRIS PASSAMANO HAS, HE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE STAMFORD HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC PROGRAM!</p>

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	Thank you for your time.