

To: The Board of Finance, Board of Representatives, Board of Education, Dr. Lucero and Mayor Simmons

My name is Reischea Canidate-Kapasouris. My husband Alexandros and I are long time residents of Stamford with two children currently attending Stamford Public Schools. Our 13 year old son is a seventh grader at Scofield Magnet Middle School, went to Newfield Elementary School and even attended Apples for preschool. Our soon to be 8 year old daughter is in the second grade at Newfield Elementary School. Both also play hockey for the Stamford Sharks at Terry Conners Rink, we are a Stamford family through and through!

As public school attendees ourselves, be it outside of Connecticut all together, providing our kids a diverse community and top notch education has always been of great importance to us. We both had that background in our respective school experiences and wanted to be certain our kids got the same rich exposure as well. We have achieved those goals within Stamford Public Schools. Unfortunately, as is the case with many public school districts, the necessary funds to continue growth and forward momentum are difficult to maintain. A school district the size of Stamford is basically a small city in and of itself and the necessary budget to maintain that small city is significant. Which is why I am compelled to send this letter.

Our Superintendent, Dr. Lucero has presented a budget reflecting Stamford Public Schools overall needs. When COVID hit, everyone made sacrifices, because we were in uncharted territory. When something of that magnitude happens, you ban together as a community to support one another. We were proud that our schools did their part. That said, the sacrifices were necessities with some being met by a temporary fix with COVID funds. With those funds

expiring, the necessities need to be addressed in order to be made whole. Dr. Lucero and SPS are looking to assure our students, teachers and staff are getting what is necessary to thrive in their learning environment. Anything less than the bare minimum requested sinks us further into the perpetual hole that SPS has been trying to scratch out of even **before** COVID hit.

Dr. Lucero's current budget request is not a suggestion in need of your further revision. Dr. Lucero and her team have done the extremely difficult work to make sure every dollar is accounted for. If you look at the past budget requests, 'wasteful' is not a term you can associate with the budget line items she has been associated with. Yes, the number is big, but when you are continually trying to make up for past cuts and add a pandemic on top, this 'ask' could easily be much greater.

SPS is not alone, and the circumstances have hit most districts the same. Danbury asked for a 20% increase, Bridgeport asked for a 22% increase. While it is easy to see how a school district could come to an increase of that size, those districts know that more work needs to be done to find a more manageable situation. Norwalk did their work and parred their ask down to 8.2%. Like Norwalk, Dr. Lucero and her team did the work and are asking for a 6.43% increase. Dr. Lucero is being fiscally responsible in asking for the absolute need to keep SPS moving forward and not falling behind.

Please do your part. We know this means raising the taxes of the residents of Stamford, but just as Stamford Public Schools sacrificed for our community, the community needs to respond in kind for the betterment of the kids in our community. Maintaining and growing the type of diverse learning environment that has enriched the lives of so many kids, including my own, is worth every penny!

Respectfully,
Reischea Canidate-Kapasouris
Scofield & Newfield Parent
Stamford Community Resident