

April 3, 2024

Dear Chairman Freedman, Vice Chairman Rinaldi, Mr. Alswanger, Ms. Burwick, Mr. Mahoney, and Mr. McMullen:

My name is Ruth Haendler and I am a social worker at Turn of River Middle School and have worked for Stamford Public Schools for 17 years. I have lived in Stamford for 40 years and claim two successful sons as Stamford High graduates. Now I have grandchildren who will hopefully be attending our public schools.

However, tonight, I write specifically about our Turn of River Family Facilitator, Ms. Patty Morales. I have worked beside her and with her for the past 17 years. Teachers, administrators and social workers rely heavily on parent facilitators to help us connect with families in their native language, and to help families navigate the complexities of a large urban school system. Please come visit us for more than several minutes to watch our TOR family facilitator in action. Her phone is constantly ringing and receiving texts from parents from 6 am to 11 pm. She is our beacon in guiding parents through our confusing system. She is the "front woman" of Turn of River, the first person many parents meet. She is welcoming, intelligent and "gets things done." She is a vital part of our pupil personnel team. Non certified status does not stop Ms. Morales from going above and beyond her duties. Losing her position would put an added burden on teachers, social workers and counselors at a time when we are still trying to help students recover from COVID-era learning loss and a meteoric rise in mental health challenges for all our families.

I understand the need to balance many competing priorities; but when you review the budget, look at the best value added asset that we possess with family facilitators like Ms. Morales. As a Stamford taxpayer I do not love the idea of rising taxes: however, I am writing today to request that the Board of Finance approve the Board of Education's FY25 proposed operating budget as submitted and keep the Family Facilitators as part of our schools.

I hope you will take the above into consideration when you vote on the BOE's FY25 proposed budget.

Respectfully,

Ruth Haendler