

Dear Commissioner Wentzell,

We are writing out of concern regarding the New Haven Board of Education's proposal to charge school districts tuition for non-resident students participating in its magnet school program beginning in September of 2016. Given that our districts are the primary stakeholders in this situation, we foresee substantial academic and financial fall-out, should it be approved. We are requesting that you do not approve the proposal. This is especially critical given the timing of the municipal budget review process, as well as the lack of financial support to LEAs from the state. According to New Haven's tuition plan:

- West Haven stands to pay more than \$750,000 in the first year in which tuition is imposed, and more than \$2 million in the third year;
- Hamden's tuition bill in the first year would be more than \$420,000 and over \$1.1 million in year three;
- East Haven's tuition bill would be more than \$264,000 in year one and increase to \$700,000 by the third year;
- Derby projects a bill of \$66,000 in the first year and \$176,000 in year three;
- Wallingford projects to pay more than \$60,000 in the first year and over \$180,000 in the third year; and
- Naugatuck would be due to pay \$44,250 in year one and \$132,750 in year three.

While other districts sending fewer students to magnet schools would pay less, their budgets are generally smaller—meaning that any additional expenditure, no matter the size, has an effect on finances and, therefore, academic offerings.

New Haven is not the only city in Connecticut requiring additional financial support. On the contrary, we are all in the middle of budgetary challenges while still attempting to offer a quality education. The academic and economic needs of our youngsters are not so different and require a per pupil allocation that the ECS cannot meet.

Our school districts simply cannot afford to pay these fees, unless we cut from our own schools and programs--while our schools would suffer the results of less funding, New Haven magnet schools would still receive money they need to provide their programs and services. This makes for bad public policy, and our state shouldn't be supporting it.

We have been good neighbors and partners in education with New Haven and wish to maintain that relationship; however, we need you to intervene on behalf of the participating districts. Our budgets have already been adopted by our Boards of Education and are in advanced stages of review with town and city agencies.

We respectfully urge you to halt progress on this policy proposal and to revisit why this program, as well as others across the state, was implemented in the first place-- to give area students equal access to new educational opportunities. Maintaining tuition-free magnet school enrollment means supporting the success of magnet students *and* students who choose to remain in their neighborhood schools.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with you and we await your response.