

Good afternoon, Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Ethan Spinelli, I have been a public educator for 19 years in Connecticut. I teach 8th grade science at RHAM middle school in Hebron. I also represent the teachers at RHAM as president of the RHAM Education Association. We are Regional District 8, a district that serves grades 7-12 and supports 1,507 students from the towns of Hebron, Andover, and Marlborough.

I am here to let you know: we need your help.

Like most regional districts, our small, rural communities are struggling with the uncertainty of ECS funding. Our district has one of the lowest per pupil expenditures in the state and yet our students perform above state and national averages year after year. We WILL not be able to continue to provide programming and services to ALL our students without adequate financial support from the state. The governor's budget will cut funding to Hebron, Andover, and Marlborough by a total of 1.36 million dollars. This is an 11.7% cut from the amount originally enacted. *In addition* to the 1 million held back from the enacted budget after the bill was signed into law.

Regional schools face a unique challenge. ECS funding is sent to each municipality and these sending towns then send a portion to their regional middle or high schools. With each town facing uncertainty of their own funding, regional districts like RHAM will face additional pressure to decrease their educational budget to cover the shortfall in funding.

At RHAM, cuts in ECS funding will reduce programming and activities necessary to educate the whole child. Without ECS funding extracurricular clubs and activities, support services, intervention classes for students developing in math, reading, and writing, facility improvements and maintenance, and school safety initiatives become the first to be removed from starving budgets. New educator training will be eliminated without the support or funding for the TEAM program.

In addition to these cuts, our district is also exploring increases in Pay-to-Play athletic fees. All departments have been under spending freezes since this past October, limiting the ability of our teachers to access the materials needed to help our students continue to excel academically.

These broad and sweeping changes reduce the ability of our students to receive a wide-ranging education. It will reduce the ability of students to interact and engage with teachers, counselors, and administrators – those that are responsible for the academic, social, and emotional well-being of the children in Connecticut.

The uncertainty of ECS funding will negatively affect all districts but will undoubtedly alter the education landscape and futures of small, rural districts, like Region 8 across Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ethan Spinelli

Marlborough Resident