

Good evening, Senators Osten and Formica, and Representative Walker.

My name is Tim Zeuschner, and I am a social studies teacher at South Windsor High School. I have been a teacher for thirty-two years, the last eighteen in public schools.

I am here today to address the crisis in our public schools and how continuing budget cuts are causing havoc for our public schools and our students.

As a result of the 2017 budget bill, ECS funding to South Windsor was cut by \$1,703,243, or 13.3% **for this school year. The governor's proposed budget revision cuts another \$1.3 million from what the bipartisan budget promised South Windsor when it passed in October.** Adding to years of underfunding, my district simply cannot meet all of the needs of all of our students. Add to this the elimination of funding for the state's new teacher mentoring program (TEAM), and we are no longer able to support our new teachers and effectively help them become the best teachers they can be.

When I started at South Windsor High School, the social studies department had more teachers. The district had more teachers. Teachers haven't been laid off (yet), but retired teachers have not been replaced. This creates larger class size and affects student achievement.

I am fortunate to teach in a town that values education. Our superintendent and town leaders have been supportive in meeting the constitutional mandate of a free, fair public education. This proposal puts such support in jeopardy. In jeopardy not because of any less desire by the superintendent, town leaders, or teachers to provide high-quality education, but in jeopardy due to a fiscal burden put onto South Windsor Public Schools by a governor who has failed to lead on educational issues and provide needed reform to educational funding. Leadership is having a vision for our children's future. Leadership is charting that vision and finding ways to make it work. Leadership is bringing groups together toward that common goal of a great education for every child in Connecticut. Unfortunately, on the issue of education in Connecticut, what we have is over seven years of failed executive leadership. Poor leadership that seeks to divide rather than unite; to assume rather than listen; to claim a moral superiority while being politically craven.

Public education is underfunded. My colleagues and I all spend hundreds of dollars of our own money to buy supplies because the school runs out. Budget freezes come earlier and earlier in the school year. Everybody knows there is a budget crisis. Cuts are coming from every level of government. You must remember as you consider these disastrous cuts for South Windsor and other communities, you are damaging our greatest resource. People move to this great state because of its education system. We all know people who have left, but they stayed while they had kids in school! Our education is our greatest selling point. Pass these shortsighted cuts, which seem like an easy solution now, and Connecticut will pay the price in the near future. The impact of the state's disinvestment in education is very real, and public school children who attend their local schools are the victims. I urge you to restore funding to our public schools and provide the resources that help children in South Windsor's schools and other schools in Connecticut facing cuts.

Thank you,

Tim Zeuschner
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