

**CITY OF NORWALK  
FINANCE & CLAIMS COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 12, 2026  
BY COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS CITY HALL 3RD FLOOR AND ZOOM  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

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Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial \*9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Chitsamay Lam at [clam@norwalkct.gov](mailto:clam@norwalkct.gov) with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Frayer called the meeting to order at 6:31p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Chair Frayer called the Roll: James Frayer, Nicole Eaddy, Johan Lopez, Broderick Sawyer, Richard Dellinger, Brian Bailey, Dajuan Wiggins (6:39 p.m.)

At Roll Call there were six (6) Committee members present, constituting a quorum. Dajuan Wiggins arrived at 6:39 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE:** James Frayer, Chair; Nicole Eaddy, Broderick Sawyer, Richard Dellinger, Brian Bailey, Johan Lopez, Dajuan Wiggins (6:39 p.m.)

**STAFF:** Paul Gorman, Tax Assessor; Jared Schmitt, Finance Director; Lamond Daniels, Chief of Staff

**OTHERS:** Anne Wennerstrand, Josh Goldstein, Jesse Buccolo, Jan Degenshein, David Westmoreland, Doug Hempstead

### **III. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 RECOMMENDED OPERATING BUDGET**

Mr. Schmitt gave a brief introduction to the budget. The screen was shared and he discussed the operating budget revenue by source slide from the PowerPoint presentation. He said they rely heavily on the property tax revenue. He said there were a couple of changes, particularly in the investment income which is down due to interest rates going down. They are also decreasing their reliance on fund balance by a million dollars. He went through the spending side of the budget. The overall increase is 7.04%. The increase to the city side is 10.72% and the increase to the Board of Education is 4% proposed. The BOE's increase includes a \$4.5 million in the FY26 base budget. Employee benefits are increasing very dramatically due to healthcare and reliance on their internal service funds in the past and having to catch up/make up appropriations within the budget. They included a salary lapse of \$3 million because in the past they were consistently under budget in salaries.

- **Chris** of Bubblebee Lane. (Virtual) He is a lifelong resident. He wanted to know about the reimbursement or payments to residents that have been relocated due to code violations, but when the question was asked if they got reimbursed they were unclear how much. There should be a definite answer as to how much was spent and how much they are getting reimbursed. Then he hears that they are raising people's salaries to retain them. If there is no clear understanding or follow-up on finances then he doesn't understand why they are paying more money to retain people. Raising taxes for pensions for the fire and police to raise morale would have a huge financial impact on the city. Let's not burden the city for 5 to 10 decades. He said now they are adding red lights which are supposed to be for safety, but the comment was it is being done for revenue. He said they need to enforce the zoning fines. He said people are getting away with violations with no fines. Recreation and Parks need more funding in their budget. In January, the city council said they would and only gave an additional \$80,000.00 which is not enough. He asked the committee to fund Recreation and Parks.
- **Mandy Singh** of 73 North Seir Hill Road. (Virtual) She has lived here for 17 years and has three (3) children in the NPS. She is the PTO president of Cranberry Elementary School. She urges the committee to fully fund the BOE budget. She knows that this happened last year. She represents a large group of parents and they do care. She said she is so proud of the improvements she has

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seen within NPS. The arts program is a sense of pride for the parents. She said 2.5% can make a big difference to the art programs.

- **Lisa Brinton** of 19 Shorefront Park (In-Person) She stated there needs to be a thorough discussion about revenue, specifically a complete understanding of the city's grand list and if they are planning, assessing and taxing commercial property with the same gusto as they do residential property. She inquired about field cards on multi-family homes, their number of units and market values and if those numbers are correct. She said this is a valid request since the grand list is 90% of the revenue stream. She said after more than a decade of non-stop construction 19,000 homeowners pick up the majority tab for a city approaching 100,000 people. She asked about the status of redevelopments going on in the city. She said as a tax paying homeowner, she deserves to know what she subsidized and continues to subsidize and still come up short on the budget. She asked about abatements in other cities, whether the assessment process for commercial is as robust as residential. She said she has spoken with industry experts and heard that the city uses data collectors instead of certified property appraisers. They opt to pay penalties to avoid claiming income or assets so that assessors may lowball evaluations to avoid lawsuits from legal teams which is something that homeowners cannot do. She would like the city to start focusing on revenue instead of beating themselves for over 20 years for not being able to fund the city.
- **Nick Zerzan** of 1 Jean Avenue (In-Person) He has three (3) children in NPS. He would like the committee to fully fund the school budget. He said last year the BOE members had to face an angry mob of citizens that were furious about eliminating the music program. He talked about who gets cut in order to find the \$6 million.
- **Emily Card** of 156 Woodward Avenue (In-Person) She is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Concord Magnet School. She said she was at the budget meeting last year as well. She is speaking up for the music teachers and the possible loss of the elementary music program. She said that these music programs have made her confident and expressive. She said she was terrified and devastated when she heard her favorite music teacher might lose her job. She is asking the committee to not cut any of the music teachers jobs.
- **Sara Rabito** of 90 Newtown Avenue (In-Person) She is the co-president of the Concord Magnet School PTA. She said their schools should be a top priority and the BOE budget cap needs to be closed. Last year's budget crisis was destabilizing. When there is uncertainty year after year they lose more than time. They lose educators, morale and trust and ultimately the students lose. Staffing matters in the classroom and special education. Mandated services must be implemented appropriately. She stated that if IEP's are not properly implemented due to staffing, that not only fail the students, but it could also bring lawsuits which would not be fiscally responsible and preventable. Strong schools support

property values; they attract families and strengthen economic vitality in Norwalk. This is about maintaining what currently exists. Investing in Norwalk schools is about investing in our future.

- **Tony B.** of 515 West Avenue (In-Person) He is advocating for fully funding the Business Development and Tourism Office. He stated that their budget has gone down in the current proposal. He said the staff running that department for the city provides a massive amount of value for the city in terms of public morale, civic participation and good publicity and the benefit to the small businesses. He says it is to everyone's benefit to fully fund the Business Development and Tourism Office.
- **Ana Tabachneck** of 4 Gilbert Street (Virtual) She hopes to hear that they will get the latest figures on the relocation costs. She would like to see a public website where they can see the relocation costs for the year, the amount reimburses, the amount going to leans and the properties that are outstanding. She would like to see improvements in enforcement of zoning fines. She would like to see all of the abatements presently in place so they can stop the misinformation going around about abatements. There is no reason this cannot be public. Most importantly, she wants to see the BOE fully funded. She said 4% is not enough.
- **Franciska F.** (Virtual) She was born in Norwalk. Two (2) children in NPS. She is advocating to fully fund the BOE. She said last year there was discussion about the part-time nursing staff and the art teachers being removed. Her daughter suffered a brain hemorrhage which occurred at school. The amazing school nurse, Stephanie Morancy is the reason her daughter is likely alive because she was there. They need these resources and please fully fund the budget.

**In-Person Public Participation Sign-Up Sheet for the Finance & Claims Committee Public Hearing**

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2026-2027 Operating Budget -- February 12, 2026

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SIGN UP SHEET**

*Please keep comments to 3 minutes or less*

<u>Start</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
5:46 <sup>1</sup>	Lisa Brinton	19 Shorefront Park
5:50 <sup>2</sup>	NICK Zerzan	1 Jean Ave
6:53 <sup>3</sup>	Emily Card	156 Woodward Ave
6:55 <sup>4</sup>	Sarah Rabak	90 Newton Ave
5:58 <sup>5</sup>	TONY BA-CI-GA-LU-PO	515 WEST AVE
<sup>6</sup>		
<sup>7</sup>		

**2-12-26 Finance & Claims Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2026-2027  
Recommended Operating Budget  
The following were emails received for Public Comment:**

- Dear Common Council Members, I am writing to respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education’s request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high quality education, including strong district-level supports that are especially critical in the areas of curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the people who educate and support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of

Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely, **Jackeline Carkner**

- Dear Councilmembers, I am unable to attend the 2/12/2026 public hearing on the City of Norwalk's 2026-27 budget and hope that you will please review my comments via this email. Thank you for your volunteer service on behalf of all Norwalk residents. Speaking as a lifelong resident, parent of two NPS students and local businessowner, I encourage you first and foremost to work collaboratively with the Norwalk BOE to avoid a repeat of last year's budget fiasco. I'm glad to see that the Common Council and BOE are not as far apart as they were last year, but it is still important for both boards to thoughtfully collaborate on a final budget that will not result in crippling cuts to important NPS programming. That being said, I have reviewed the proposed NPS budget and wish to share some concerns about the surprising cost increases contained within it. Amidst a backdrop of actual and projected declining enrollment (pg 99 of the budget) and a relatively lower amount of cost inflation (2.7% as of December, 2025), the NPS budgeted increases of 6.5% do not hold up well to scrutiny. The benefits increases of 11.2% are not consistent with a recent KFF study that found an average increase of 6% in 2025. Similarly, increases in professional services of 13.2% seem excessive. For one, general inflation in the services economy is much lower than this. The NPS budget blames the increases on multiple language learner and special education needs, but the same document also shows that the number of MLL students actually declined in 2025 and the number of SPED students remained constant (pg 10 of the budget). NPS should explain why these increases don't appear to be explained by any of the fundamental data, and the Common Council should work with the BOE to cut back increases that aren't supportable. Thank you again for the important work you do. **David McCarthy** 35 Fox Run Rd David McCarthy 35 Fox Run Rd Norwalk, CT 06850 (203) 247-2067
- Dear Mayor, Members of the Common Council, and Members of the BET, I am writing as a Norwalk resident and parent to be absolutely clear: our schools cannot withstand another year of underfunding. Last year's budget crisis drained families, educators, and administrators alike. The uncertainty, the repeated meetings, the public outcry — it was destabilizing and entirely avoidable. Our students should not be collateral damage in another prolonged budget battle. We are already seeing the consequences. Exceptional teachers and staff are leaving for neighboring districts that offer stability and consistent support. When we lose experienced educators, our students lose continuity, mentorship, and opportunity. This is not sustainable. If adjustments must be made, they should

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not come from inside our school buildings. Classroom staffing, Special Education services, and essential student programs cannot be treated as flexible line items. Failure to properly staff Special Education not only harms vulnerable students — it exposes the district to significant legal liability when IEPs are not fully implemented. That is not just irresponsible; it is costly. Norwalk's schools are a reflection of our city. Families choose to live here because of the opportunities our district provides. Undermining those programs weakens property values, community trust, and our city's long-term competitiveness. Working families cannot afford another budget crisis — financially or emotionally. Parents should not have to repeatedly mobilize to protect basic educational services. Stability and responsible funding are not luxuries; they are obligations. Close the BOE budget gap. Protect the staffing and programs currently serving our students. Provide the stability our teachers deserve and our children require. Our students' education should not be negotiable. Sincerely, **Viviane Fleming**  
*Norwalk Resident & NPS Parent*

To the committee,

- This comment is long and longer than anticipated as I kept thinking of more factors affecting this decision but all are relevant and important to burning questions and major concerns and dissatisfaction of taxes in this city. Please read it all and take it to heart. First off, This budget is beyond extreme and killing the community and economy and residents. You think everyone has all this money AND THEY DONT. WE DONT. AND YOU PROPOSE TO RAISE TAXES 5 percent year AFTER YEAR FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE! NO. This budget is extremely high and the insulting, slap in face garbage words from Estrella and Mayor is tone deaf and disgusting AS THEY ARE RICH! Not to mention the CITY SAID THEY WERENT GOING TO EXTEND ESTRELLA CONTRACT AND LIED!! They approved it in middle of night sneakily!!! That not government, that dictatorship. We didn't forget!! Cut her salary at least by half if not more and you have more money. We know that your department didn't have decision in that, it just needs to be readdressed and remember that decision has effect on taxes too. I will say this and give credit to the people who questioned and raised red flags at meeting the other day. Watching the numbers was sickening to all. The people on committee was right to question the increase. I did not like the answer of the man who answered and said the savings are to be protected and committed to be long term. That is fine on surface but WE ALL KNOW THAT GARBAGE AND "something will come up" AND THOSE SAVINGS GET PUSHED ASIDE AND DONT HAPPEN. IT ALWAYS HAPPENS. WE KNOW THE GAME. We're done with the game and taking more money and no results. Furthermore, People DO NOT HAVE MONEY TO COVER TAXES YEAR AFTER YEAR. Estrella has NERVE TO ASK FOR MORE?! She's emailing and sending texts to TELL PUBLIC TO PUSH FOR MORE?!!! She's insane. I'm glad the higher amount was not approved and DO NOT APPROVE INCREASING AS SHE SAID. I agree with the 4 percent approved even though I

think it should be lower and other taxes should be cut somewhere else. If you want to tax people out of town that's fine, but you will have no one left to tax. In addition, the Mayor comment is also disgusting as she could care less who loses their house or has to sleep cold or not buy food or their meds to pay these stupid taxes. Difficult she says. What nerve. There also needs to be conditions AND EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHERE MONEY IS GOING. I know some are line by line but IS IT REALLY GOING THERE? Why for school budget are budgets not easily outlined AND POSTED WHICH SCHOOL GOT WHAT AND HOW MUCH AND WHEN? That basic business and accounting. IT SUPPOSED TO BE POSTED AND IT NOT AND WHEN ASKED FOR BY CITY IT NOT GIVEN OR GIVE EXCUSE OF COVID. Same goes for the curriculum not being posted and giving excuses. It should be there since inception and it never has. We need to see which school gets what as that is easy to do and demanded. We need to know why schools are still begging for money in tens of thousands after they get their tax money. There should be an audit. If there has been one, I would love to read it. So the proposed budget is clearly too high and questions raised by committee the other day need to be addressed directly. If a budget has to be approved, it should be no higher than this. Do not listen to Estrella, as I know you haven't since taxpayers can't take anymore and are complaining. Not to mention the raises to city workers DO NOT COVER THE TAX INCREASES! IT CRIMINAL. BASIC MATH! 2.5 percent raise doesn't cover 5 percent tax increase! ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU TAX PAY WITH INCOME TAX FIRST!! So people get raises to just pay taxes?! It doesn't even cover the taxes. Furthermore, Lamont VETOED AND DECIDED TO KEEP OUR MONEY AND SAID YES TO TAXING ON OVERTIME AND TIPS!! So more money gone on overtime. To reiterate, Estrella who is rich off of OUR money and Mayor who says it's "difficult" is beyond rude, disgusting and tone deaf. They do not care. No one has money for anything. Lastly, which relates to this is scam of house cost and appraisals that start at federal level as they just say and decree at the FED, the house market is what the house market is. You know they literally say it and it done. There is no demand and basic economics is on supply and demand, but we know at the federal reserve that with those announcement that house prices are up they go up. At the announcement that house Prices are down they go down. We have seen the same scam and the disgusting song and dance expose over decades. Because we know it is artificially inflated; everybody does. Nobody can afford to buy the houses and they are not worth that. Everybody knows what their house was built at and what they sold for so just because that the dollar is losing its value doesn't mean that house prices inflate that much. It's because the federal reserve is trying to make more money off of Americans and because of that, it says a house that was built for \$10,000 is now worth \$1 million. That's absolute garbage nonsense it's not and nobody is paying \$800-\$1 million for 1000 square-foot house when people bought it in our grandparents

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era for \$20,000 and then our parents bought their houses for \$50-\$100,000. The houses are not worth what they are and so the local government is trying to take more money off of the words, pure words, not market of the federal government for several years now and everybody knows the scam. Everybody knows the deal with the history behind us. So with that said, if the FED tomorrow said oh the market is stabilized and house prices go back to normal. How do you guys compensate for that at the local level? Because you guys are basing this off of fake and criminal inflated numbers that these houses are not worth and the prices of everything that you have listed in the other meeting have gone up for our city baseline running numbers. But how does that reconcile or get balanced in the checkbook when the house prices go back down and you have budgeted this over several years? So say in the middle of you guys increasing these taxes as you have told us, the taxes will go up 5% for the next several years because of the fake inflated values of houses. How will that be corrected if they announce the price of houses go down? We would need to re-appraise the house immediately and everybody's appraisals would be lower and then the taxes should follow. So what is the answer and how will it be accounted for if you're counting on this much money for the next several years but if house prices go down so then the taxes must go down as well! I want specific and direct answers. I can't remember the last time taxes went down. I know that they have at one point in history, but not in well over a decade. what is the solution?! Are you gonna keep taxes high even if the house prices decline or are you going to re-appraise the houses and give us our money back and drop taxes considerably? Because these house prices are such a joke and even the common sense people who have a soul or a conscience would not sell their house for the price that they're so-called saying it's worth. No one with a soul would sell their house for \$1 million for a tiny 1400 square-foot house or even a 2500 square-foot house it's not worth it. They're just not. So I would like to know if the house prices were to drop tomorrow would there be an immediate appraisal? Because we would demand one anyway; and would taxes drop accordingly as they should and if so, how would that affect the budget for the city? Does that go down or does that stay the same and increase even if the house prices decrease? That's a huge question. Please discuss and do not approve more than what was discussed at previous meeting. I agree there are many red flags and the prices were astronomical as the people at the meeting have pointed and I thank them for that. Sorry for the very long comment, but it is all very relevant as taxes are complex and it is not only state and local affected. All of these pieces of the puzzle affect the taxes and have been burning questions and concerns. Thank you for your time and attention and keeping this as low as possible. I think this email portrays the frustration of all Norwalk. No one is saying they don't want things or good education but this is clearly way too high. Thank you **Christina D**

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- To Whom it May Concern: Please fully fund the budget request for Norwalk's schools. The request for 6.5% is reasonable and necessary, and only allowing a smaller amount will directly impact our students and the quality of their education. We cannot repeat last year's last minute-budget crisis. It is not fair to sacrifice our most vulnerable, our students, while we fight this out in the public square. The traumatic cut and reinstatement cycle last year was felt by my student and our whole family, and we must do better this year. Please consider the thoughtful request as outlined and fully allow the 6.5% increase so that we do not lose critical positions in our schools. Sincerely, **Collette Agnese** Parent of CMS student, Norwalk CT
- Dear Mayor, Members of the Common Council, and Members of the BET, I am writing in my role as Co-President of the Concord Magnet School PTA, and on behalf of the many families who are deeply concerned about the current BOE budget gap. Let me be clear: this gap must be closed. Our schools cannot sustain another year of instability. Last year's budget uncertainty created significant disruption — not only within our classrooms, but across our entire community. Families mobilized, teachers worried about their positions, and administrators were forced to plan under shifting assumptions. That level of disruption should not become routine. At CMS and across Norwalk, our schools are already operating efficiently and carefully. Classroom staffing, Special Education services, and school-based programming are not areas that can absorb further strain without direct impact on students. When staffing is stretched too thin, services suffer. When mandated services cannot be fully delivered, the district is exposed to legal and financial risk. Most importantly, children lose critical support. We are also facing a retention challenge. Ongoing uncertainty makes it harder to keep talented educators and staff. Stability matters — not just for morale, but for the continuity and quality of instruction our students deserve. As PTA leaders, we see firsthand how hard our families work and how much they invest in their children's education. Parents cannot continue to carry the burden of recurring budget crises. Our community needs predictability and responsible planning. This is not about expansion or excess. It is about maintaining current staffing levels, protecting essential programs, and ensuring that Norwalk's students receive the education they are entitled to. Closing the BOE budget gap is necessary to provide that stability. We respectfully urge you to act decisively and close the gap now. Our students, educators, and families are counting on thoughtful, steady leadership. Sincerely, Sarah Rabito Norwalk Resident, NPS Parent and Co-President, Concord Magnet School PTA **Sarah Rabito** 917.880.4298
- To the Norwalk City Council's Finance and Claims Committee, It is with great disappointment that I am viewing the recommended budget for the FY 2026-2027 in regards to Norwalk Public Schools. As a taxpayer and parent, it is highly upsetting that we are facing another year of property tax increases, but yet

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another year of underfunding our schools. As a parent of an incoming Kindergartener and preschooler, it is very upsetting to feel that our schools are not valued appropriately. Underfunding the budget by \$6.07 million from the requested amount will be extremely difficult for our schools to meet. With rising healthcare costs and contractual obligations, as well as a desire to continue free and reduced lunch programming for our students (which helps MANY children access food in the district), it is essential that we fund our schools appropriately. I fear that if the City chooses to underfund the district once again, we will be back to the harrowing consideration of cutting special education administration, teachers, and music and arts programming. All of these positions are essential. If special education administration is cut, students who receive special education support will have delays in accessing legally required meetings, which will not only delay services but could lead to increased costs for mediation and legal challenges. Cuts to teachers and music or arts programming limits student success and removes access to high quality instruction that supports cognitive development, as well as removing programs that bring joy to the school setting. CT as a whole faces a teacher shortage, especially in special education. How can we continue to expect high quality teachers to be brought to our district and remain in our district if teacher and administrative positions are consistently being considered to be cut? We are constantly asking schools to do more with less. As a mother who attends programs in multiple districts, when I share that we live in Norwalk, I frequently hear "Are you going to move to get to better schools?" or "are you putting your kids in private school?" WHY am I hearing this? Because our resources are consistently being limited. We love living in Norwalk, and it has so much to offer, but it is extremely upsetting to see that our schools are experiencing financial strain year after year. You need to do better. Fund our schools, give them what they need. Our children depend on it. With thanks, **Lisa Baker** 21 Donohue Dr, Norwalk.

- I respectfully request the preliminary budget request from the Board of Education be funded. Thank you **Mary Noonan** 9 Heritage Hill Road Norwalk CT 06851
- Dear Mayor, Members of the Common Council, and Members of the BET, Close the BOE budget gap. Now. Our schools cannot endure another year of uncertainty, cuts, and last-minute scrambling. Last year's crisis disrupted classrooms, destabilized staff, and forced working families to spend countless hours fighting to preserve basic educational services. That cannot happen again. Every year we delay or underfund, we lose ground. We are already watching talented teachers and critical staff leave for districts that provide stability and consistent support. When educators walk away, students pay the price. recruitment becomes harder. Morale declines. Trust erodes. Classroom staffing and student services are not optional. Special Education services are not optional. Essential academic and enrichment programs are not optional. Failing to fully fund these areas not only harms students — it exposes the district to

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serious legal and financial consequences when mandated services cannot be delivered. That is not fiscal responsibility; it is short-sighted and costly. Norwalk families are not asking for expansion. We are asking for stability. We are asking you to protect what currently exists in our schools. We are asking you to ensure that our children are not the ones absorbing the consequences of budget gaps. Working parents cannot relive another prolonged budget battle. Our time, energy, and focus should be on supporting our children — not attending emergency meetings to prevent preventable cuts that should be easily avoided. Close the BOE budget gap immediately. Provide full, stable funding. Protect our teachers. Protect our programs. Protect our students. Our children's education is not negotiable. Sincerely, **Joe Rabito** *Norwalk Resident & NPS Parent*

- Please review and share the attached letters of public comment from our parent community at the Silvermine Dual Language School at tonight's meeting. Be well, **Lucy Sierra**
- Dear Mayor Smyth, elected members of City Council, and un-elected members of the BET, As follow up to my 9/22/25 email to the prior administration, we now find ourselves facing a mere 4% NPS budget increase which falls short of the 6.5% increase request. It is imperative the City dedicate the 6.5%. A 4% increase will not sufficiently ensure services and stability for our students and staff. Please do not force Dr. Estrella and her administration and our BOE to make cuts that hurt Norwalk students by underfunding Norwalk Public Schools. Thank you **Mallory Moyer** 22 New Canaan Court
- Dear Chitsamay, Thank you for coordinating public comments for this evening's meeting. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend in person or via Zoom, and I respectfully ask that the letter below be read aloud on my behalf. I truly appreciate your time and support in ensuring community voices are shared. Warm regards, **Charlotte Boutarel** (Cranbury Elementary Parent and member of the Cranbury SGC). Good evening members of the Norwalk City Council Finance and Claims Committee, While I'm unable to attend today's meeting in person, I truly appreciate the opportunity to submit my comments and thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. My name is Charlotte Boutarel, and I am a Norwalk parent and community member. I'm writing to respectfully urge you to set a preliminary budget cap that allows for restoration of the Board of Education's Tentative Approved Budget at the full 6.5%. Like many families, I deeply appreciate the thoughtful and collaborative process that has taken place between the City and the Norwalk Public Schools. I also recognize that this year's budget decisions are happening in a challenging fiscal environment, with rising healthcare costs and unavoidable increases tied to contracts, utilities, special education, and multilingual learner services. That said, the Superintendent's Recommended Budget represents one of the lowest percentage increases requested in recent history. Even so, the Mayor's proposed 4% allocation leaves a \$6.07 million gap. That shortfall is not abstract.

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It directly impacts classrooms, staffing, student services, and the day-to-day learning experience of our children. Our schools are already doing more with less. Teachers and staff continue to show up every day for our scholars with dedication, creativity, and resilience. Families rely on strong school programs not only for academic growth, but for stability, equity, and opportunity. Further reductions risk compromising the progress our district has worked so hard to achieve. I believe investing in education is investing in the future of Norwalk. Strong schools strengthen property values, attract families and businesses, and help ensure that every child has access to the resources they need to succeed. I respectfully ask this committee to support a preliminary budget cap that enables restoration of the full 6.5% increase requested by the Board of Education. This level of funding is essential to meeting basic operational needs and sustaining the quality of education our community expects and deserves. Thank you for your service, for your consideration, and for your continued partnership with our schools. While I regret that I cannot be present this evening, I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts and hope you will stand with Norwalk families by fully supporting our public schools. Thank you.

- Dear Mayor, Members of the Common Council, and Members of the BET, I am writing as a Norwalk resident and parent to be absolutely clear: our schools cannot withstand another year of underfunding. Last year's budget crisis drained families, educators, and administrators alike. The uncertainty, the repeated meetings, the public outcry — it was destabilizing and entirely avoidable. Our students should not be collateral damage in another prolonged budget battle. We are already seeing the consequences. Exceptional teachers and staff are leaving for neighboring districts that offer stability and consistent support. When we lose experienced educators, our students lose continuity, mentorship, and opportunity. This is not sustainable. If adjustments must be made, they should not come from inside our school buildings. Classroom staffing, Special Education services, and essential student programs cannot be treated as flexible line items. Failure to properly staff Special Education not only harms vulnerable students — it exposes the district to significant legal liability when IEPs are not fully implemented. That is not just irresponsible; it is costly. Norwalk's schools are a reflection of our city. Families choose to live here because of the opportunities our district provides. Undermining those programs weakens property values, community trust, and our city's long-term competitiveness. Working families cannot afford another budget crisis — financially or emotionally. Parents should not have to repeatedly mobilize to protect basic educational services. Stability and responsible funding are not luxuries; they are obligations. Close the BOE budget gap. Protect the staffing and programs currently serving our students. Provide the stability our teachers deserve and our children require. Our students' education should not be negotiable. Sincerely, **Viviane Fleming** Norwalk Resident & NPS Parent

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- Dear Councilmembers, I am unable to attend the 2/12/2026 public hearing on the City of Norwalk's 2026-27 budget and hope that you will please review my comments via this email. Thank you for your volunteer service on behalf of all Norwalk residents. Speaking as a lifelong resident, parent of two NPS students and local businessowner, I encourage you first and foremost to work collaboratively with the Norwalk BOE to avoid a repeat of last year's budget fiasco. I'm glad to see that the Common Council and BOE are not as far apart as they were last year, but it is still important for both boards to thoughtfully collaborate on a final budget that will not result in crippling cuts to important NPS programming. That being said, I have reviewed the proposed NPS budget and wish to share some concerns about the surprising cost increases contained within it. Amidst a backdrop of actual and projected declining enrollment (pg 99 of the budget) and a relatively lower amount of cost inflation (2.7% as of December, 2025), the NPS budgeted increases of 6.5% do not hold up well to scrutiny. The benefits increases of 11.2% are not consistent with a recent KFF study that found an average increase of 6% in 2025. Similarly, increases in professional services of 13.2% seem excessive. For one, general inflation in the services economy is much lower than this. The NPS budget blames the increases on multiple language learner and special education needs, but the same document also shows that the number of MLL students actually declined in 2025 and the number of SPED students remained constant (pg 10 of the budget). NPS should explain why these increases don't appear to be explained by any of the fundamental data, and the Common Council should work with the BOE to cut back increases that aren't supportable. Thank you again for the important work you do. **David McCarthy** 35 Fox Run Rd -- David McCarthy 35 Fox Run Rd Norwalk, CT 06850 (203) 247-2067
- Dear Mayor, Members of the Common Council, and Members of the BET, I am writing as a concerned Norwalk resident and parent. Our schools, teachers, and students cannot afford to be underfunded again this year. The amount of time, stress, and energy expended by families, educators, and city leaders during last year's budget crisis should not be repeated. Norwalk is a community of hardworking families who deserve stable, fully supported public schools. We are already seeing the impact of ongoing uncertainty. Talented teachers and staff are leaving for neighboring districts that can offer greater stability. Continued instability makes it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain high-quality educators, which ultimately affects our students. If budget adjustments are necessary, I strongly urge that they not come at the expense of staffing and programming within our school buildings. Our schools are already stretched thin. Critical areas, including Special Education, must be properly staffed to ensure that IEPs are implemented and students receive the services they are legally entitled to. Failure to do so not only harms students, but exposes the district and city to costly legal challenges. Each of our schools offers specialized programs

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that make Norwalk unique and competitive. Cutting essential programs or staff weakens the foundation of our district and compromises the future of our city. Working families cannot endure another prolonged budget crisis. The level of time and advocacy required last year placed a heavy burden on parents who are balancing careers and caregiving responsibilities. Stability matters — for students, for educators, and for families. I respectfully urge you to close the BOE budget gap and ensure that our schools can maintain current staffing levels and programs. We are not asking for expansion — we are asking not to fall behind. Thank you for your attention and for your service to our community. Sincerely,  
**Jamie Machotka** Norwalk Resident and Parent

- To the Norwalk City Council's Finance and Claims Committee, It is with great disappointment that I am viewing the recommended budget for the FY 2026-2027 in regards to Norwalk Public Schools. As a taxpayer and parent, it is highly upsetting that we are facing another year of property tax increases, but yet another year of underfunding our schools. As a parent of an incoming Kindergartener and preschooler, it is very upsetting to feel that our schools are not valued appropriately. Underfunding the budget by \$6.07 million from the requested amount will be extremely difficult for our schools to meet. With rising healthcare costs and contractual obligations, as well as a desire to continue free and reduced lunch programming for our students (which helps MANY children access food in the district), it is essential that we fund our schools appropriately. I fear that if the City chooses to underfund the district once again, we will be back to the harrowing consideration of cutting special education administration, teachers, and music and arts programming. All of these positions are essential. If special education administration is cut, students who receive special education support will have delays in accessing legally required meetings, which will not only delay services but could lead to increased costs for mediation and legal challenges. Cuts to teachers and music or arts programming limits student success and removes access to high quality instruction that supports cognitive development, as well as removing programs that bring joy to the school setting. CT as a whole faces a teacher shortage, especially in special education. How can we continue to expect high quality teachers to be brought to our district and remain in our district if teacher and administrative positions are consistently being considered to be cut? We are constantly asking schools to do more with less. As a mother who attends programs in multiple districts, when I share that we live in Norwalk, I frequently hear "Are you going to move to get to better schools?" or "are you putting your kids in private school?" WHY am I hearing this? Because our resources are consistently being limited. We love living in Norwalk, and it has so much to offer, but it is extremely upsetting to see that our schools are experiencing financial strain year after year. You need to do better. Fund our schools, give them what they need. Our children depend on it. Regards, **Andrew Wyatt Baker** 21 Donohue Dr., Norwalk, CT 06851

- Dear Norwalk Leaders, Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the budget early in the process, and for your dedication to Norwalk. I understand and appreciate the challenges the city faces in funding services across many areas, particularly with competing factions demanding improved services. However, I hope that additional consideration is given to the requests of the Board of Education and school district this year. With contractual obligations, rising healthcare costs, and basic maintenance, the proposed 4% may not even be sufficient. Looking across departments/divisions, many have proposed increases exceeding 4%. While many leaders run on the importance of education and wanting to invest in the children of our city, where we invest reflects our actual values. And while Education is the highest line item each year, they are facing the same inflation pressures, contractual obligations, etc. as other divisions. If the increases elsewhere are to at least maintain the level of service, and improve where possible, I believe Education should have that same opportunity. In addition to the basic needs of qualified teachers, reasonable class sizes, and safe school environments, there are three areas that will likely be under threat of budget cuts, but that I believe are integral. The first is providing support to students, whether that be additional support for students with special needs, or additional learning opportunities for students in gifted education programs. These supports provide an education that meets the child where they are and allows them to prosper as individuals. The second area that I would prioritize is providing enrichment opportunities for students, including encouraging engagement in music and art, and participation in athletics. In a changing world, and a world overwhelmed by technology that has a major impact on child development, these enrichment opportunities provide space for children to learn key real-world skills such as adaptability, perseverance and teamwork. While these opportunities are available to some students outside of the school environment, providing access to all through the public school system is consistent with the district's mission. Finally, resources for mental health are vital, particularly for those without access to external resources. My hope is that funding and positions for these three areas can be at a minimum maintained next year and in the future across the district, whether through city funds, or ideally through a more equitable share of state funding. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. Sincerely, **Jason Diffenderfer**
- I'm reaching out as a Norwalk parent and Concord Magnet School family to share my concern about the current budget discussions and the possibility of staffing cuts within our schools. After navigating similar uncertainty last year, it's discouraging to once again be facing the prospect of reductions that would directly affect students' day-to-day school experience. From a parent's perspective, there is very little, if anything, within the school day that feels expendable. What our children receive now feels like the minimum needed to support learning, growth, and well-being. My daughter was diagnosed with

dyslexia last year, and the Special Education support she receives has been critical to her progress. I also have a younger child who may need similar support in the future. The level of coordination and staffing currently in place is one of the main reasons we decided to remain in this district. Any reduction to school-based staffing, particularly in areas that support students with learning differences, would have real and lasting consequences for families like mine. More broadly, compared to surrounding towns, it already feels as though programs and offerings are stretched thin. Further cuts within schools would widen that gap and weaken what families rely on when deciding to stay in the community. I know I am not alone in urging you to explore solutions outside of our school buildings. Our schools should not be the place where gaps are closed, especially when students and educators are already operating with limited margins. Thank you for your time and consideration as you work to find an alternative solution. **Christine Tzoannopoulos**

- Dear Common Council's Finance Committee, I am writing as a parent and community member to express my strong support for restoring the Board of Education's original budget request of 6.5% for Norwalk Public Schools. While I appreciate the effort to balance competing priorities, the currently proposal of a 4% increase falls short of what is required to maintain adequate level of staffing, resources, and programming that our students and educators depend on every day. Our schools show meaningful progress because of the dedicated professionals, support systems, and learning environments already in place. Not applying the proposed request risks undermining that momentum. Maintaining essential staff and instructional resources is not a luxury but fundamental to sustaining student achievement, supporting teachers, and ensuring that classrooms remain focused on what matters most: learning and long-term success. It goes without saying that Investing in education is an investment in the future of Norwalk. Addressing funding gaps early through collaborative dialogue is far more effective than waiting until the 11th hour of the budget process to have heroes to save the day, when options become limited and difficult trade-offs are unavoidable. I respectfully urge you to reconsider the current allocation and support the BoE's original proposal. Doing so will help protect the progress already underway and demonstrate a shared commitment to the students, educators, and families who rely on our public schools. Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued work and dedication to our community. Sincerely, **Hector Pachas** 60 George Ave Norwalk, CT 06851 (203)252-1234.
- I'm Joe, a parent of a 2nd grader at Jefferson elementary. Im on the SGC for the school and help where I can. The budget shortfall needs to be addressed. We're lucky that the group of Principals at these schools are taking on so many extra roles left open by these budget shortfalls. Rather than deprive students of student-facing staff, they sacrifice their own staffing needs. Despite the other

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budget demands, the kids and the staff that directly supports them, needs greater prioritization. At the least, it is incumbent on the councils part to discover alternative, realistic gap-filling measures, as the needs of our children are not going away and the future dims every time you short-change them. Regards,  
**Joseph Ned**

- Dear Mayor, Members of City Council, and Members of the BET, I am writing as a concerned Norwalk resident and parent. Our schools, teachers, and students cannot afford to be underfunded again this year. The amount of time, stress, and energy expended by families, educators, and city leaders during last year's budget crisis should not be repeated. Norwalk is a community of hardworking families who deserve stable, fully supported public schools. We are already seeing the impact of ongoing uncertainty. Talented teachers and staff are leaving for neighboring districts that can offer greater stability. Continued instability makes it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain high-quality educators, which ultimately affects our students. If budget adjustments are necessary, I strongly urge that they not come at the expense of staffing and programming within our school buildings. Our schools are already stretched thin. Critical areas, including Special Education, must be properly staffed to ensure that IEPs are implemented and students receive the services they are legally entitled to. Failure to do so not only harms students, but exposes the district and city to costly legal challenges. Each of our schools offers specialized programs that make Norwalk unique and competitive. Cutting essential programs or staff weakens the foundation of our district and compromises the future of our city. Working families cannot endure another prolonged budget crisis. The level of time and advocacy required last year placed a heavy burden on parents who are balancing careers and caregiving responsibilities. Stability matters — for students, for educators, and for families. I respectfully urge you to close the BOE budget gap and ensure that our schools can maintain current staffing levels and programs. We are not asking for expansion — we are asking not to fall behind. Thank you for your attention and for your service to our community. Sincerely, **Lori Braddock**  
*Norwalk Resident & NPS Parent*
- Chair Frayer Vice Chair Lopez Council Members City Council Finance and Claims Committee Staff I am unable to attend tonight's Finance and Claims public hearing on the FY 26-27 Operating Budget, but I wanted to highlight several items that I have discussed before, often over several years, which remain pertinent. PLEASE DO NOT RAISE THE CAP, as many residents are still struggling, and I do not think the City has optimized revenue sources, reduced electric bills, and increased the recycling/diversion rates of our City and School system. 1. This Budget needs to dig much deeper into expanding Revenue streams: Be creative! Increase enforcement fines for the most egregious Zoning, Health, Fire Marshal, Building Code violations, and ESPECIALLY Parking tickets on our side streets. Include a more robust effort

for businesses and individuals to obtain NAMING RIGHTS and/or CO-Sponsor key events, projects, programs, buildings, or renovations. 2. Electricity Expenditures: Ask for an across-the-board cut of at least 20% of all electric cost. This may finally encourage a change in the City's backward, myopic solar energy policy as well as its limp clean energy track record on public buildings. You will be told otherwise by the Building Management Department and their consulting firms, but I have proof that we have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars cumulatively each year because we are not "making electrons" ourselves with roof-ground-mount, and carport/canopy solar installations. 3. Natural "fracked" Gas: Again, request that there be an across-the-board reduction in expenditure, possibly 20%+. I also ask that we stop automatically switching to gas after a public school building removes its underground fuel oil tank. These "free" connections by Eversource are not beneficial when we are then charged high natural gas charges. 4. Grants, especially from private Foundations: Greatly, need to increase. We have left many other, more organized cities to obtain grants because our system is weak. A Full-Time Grant Professional, located in the FINANCE DEPARTMENT, not the Mayor's Office, should find, solicit, write, followup and send annual reports to donors. Right now, we still use staff who were hired to do other jobs to manage almost the entire grant process. Our professional department staff can help the Grant professional wordsmith a grant, but not handle the entire process. 5. Fund a Sustainability Officer that all departments must work with on a daily basis. 6. DPW: Please cut back their Waste Management and Recycling Budget by about 20% unless and until they can show a real pathway to reducing municipal trash and optimizing ALL of the Recycling streams. 7. BOE, Trash and Recycling: In addition, please have DPW take over the BOE trash and recycling responsibilities, as the BOE is in violation of state statutes, and there is no reason for duplication of function. 8. BOE and Electricity Costs: Reduce costs by seriously increasing the use of clean energy and solar production on all school grounds with ground, roof, and carport/canopy construction. 9. Prohibit City rental of private buildings when there are public buildings that are vacant or can accommodate programs, such as the BOE Welcome Center, which still has not moved to a public location. Thank you for your service. **Diane Lauricella** 2023 Aquarion Water Company Environmental Champion Award 2024 Climate Reality Project Ambassador Graduate 2025 Co-host The Organic Farmstand, WPKN 89.5 FM [dlauricella24@gmail.com](mailto:dlauricella24@gmail.com) 203-858-1537

- To Whom It May Concern, I am the parent of students currently enrolled at Silvermine Elementary School, and writing this letter to express my strong support for the Dual Language Program at that school, based not only on my personal experience but also on the well-documented academic and cognitive benefits of dual language education. Extensive research over the past several decades shows that students in dual language programs consistently perform as

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well as or even better than their peers in English-only programs on standardized tests by upper elementary school. Longitudinal studies conducted by researchers such as Thomas and Collier (George Mason University) have found that dual language students often demonstrate higher long-term academic achievement, particularly in reading and math. From a cognitive perspective, research in developmental psychology and neuroscience shows that bilingualism strengthens executive functioning — including attention control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. These are foundational skills for learning across all subjects. Children who regularly switch between languages develop stronger mental flexibility and problem-solving abilities, which supports overall academic performance. The structure of the program — learning academic subjects half of the day in Spanish and half in English — builds true bilingual literacy. Students are not simply exposed to conversational vocabulary; they develop reading comprehension, academic vocabulary, and writing skills in both languages. Studies from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Center for Applied Linguistics show that this type of sustained immersion leads to higher levels of language proficiency than traditional "foreign language" classes. Additionally, bilingualism provides measurable long-term benefits. Research shows that multilingual individuals have greater career opportunities and earning potential in a global economy. Spanish, in particular, is one of the most widely spoken languages in the United States and globally, making proficiency both practical and valuable. For my children — who speak Polish at home and English in their daily environment — participation in a dual language model strengthens their linguistic development rather than dividing it. Research is clear that multilingual exposure in a structured academic setting enhances language awareness and does not cause confusion; instead, it reinforces literacy and cognitive growth. The Dual Language Program represents evidence-based education. It supports higher academic outcomes, stronger executive functioning, cultural competence, and long-term opportunity. Its benefits are supported not only by personal experience, but by decades of educational research. For these reasons, I strongly support maintaining and protecting this program. Sincerely, **Anna Beijer**

- Dear Members of the Board of Education, My name is Jessie Ruzicka, and I have daughters in second grade and kindergarten at Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School. I am writing to advocate for increased and equitable funding for Silvermine's dual language program. As a parent, I see every day how powerful this model is—not only for students who come from bilingual homes, but also for children like mine who are monolingual English speakers. Their father and I have both experienced moments in our careers when not speaking Spanish limited our opportunities for advancement. We don't want our children to encounter the same barrier. Providing them with the gift of a second language is not simply an academic enhancement; it is preparation for the real world they will inherit.

Bilingualism opens doors professionally, socially, and culturally, and it equips students to participate more fully in an increasingly diverse community. We are also living in a time when our country feels deeply divided. Programs like dual language education help children build understanding, empathy, and acceptance from an early age. Learning another language is also learning to value other perspectives and cultures. I believe this is one of the most meaningful ways schools can help prepare students to be thoughtful, respectful citizens. In addition, my second grader is an extremely strong student who consistently performs well above grade level on her assessments and earns excellent grades. The Spanish component of the program is critical for keeping her challenged, motivated, and engaged in school. Without that level of rigor and enrichment, I worry that she would not experience the same growth or excitement about learning. Silvermine's dual language model attracts families, builds cross-cultural understanding, and provides academic benefits that extend far beyond elementary school. Sustaining and strengthening it requires resources. I urge the Board to prioritize funding that ensures the program can continue to thrive and serve all students well. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to our children and our schools. Sincerely, **Jessie Ruzicka**

- Norwalk, 02/12/2026 Estimados señores de la Junta de Educación de Norwalk: Mi nombre es Gabriela Carrillo, soy madre de un niño de 9 años, su nombre es Patricio. En el año 2022 la desventura tocó nuestra puerta. Nuestro pequeño hijo de en ese entonces 6 añitos, sufrió un derrame cerebral severo que requirió de cirugías y le ocasionó muchas secuelas físicas y cognitivas. Pero justo en ese momento, cuando pensábamos que todo era adverso, tuvimos la bendición de estar apoyados por todos los miembros de Silvermine Elementary School. Nunca olvidaré la sonrisa de la señora Paredes y de todo el personal de la escuela recibiendo a mi hijo, un niño con tantas necesidades, que ha podido mejorar solo gracias al apoyo que ha recibido de la escuela, gracias por tratarlo como a los demás niños, gracias por creer en él, gracias por darnos una oportunidad para superar a la adversidad. A lo largo de este tiempo, mi hijo ha recibido todo el apoyo del equipo de maestros, de los para-profesionales, del equipo administrativo, de especialistas en salud como terapeutas, psicólogos, trabajadores sociales, enfermeras y demás personal y otros especialistas que forman parte de Silvermine Elementary School. Mi hijo tiene un Plan de Educación Especial, y es solo gracias a este plan que él ha podido mostrar mejoras a lo largo de estos años. Cada sesión de apoyo, cada adaptación en el salón de clases y cada profesional que ha trabajado con él han sido fundamental para su recuperación. En estos años hemos visto avances que en un principio parecían imposibles. Solo para ejemplificar como ha impactado el apoyo de la escuela en mi hijo, me gustaría compartir con ustedes que en septiembre de 2022 cuando mi hijo volvió a la escuela solo podía recordar y pronunciar 9 palabras y a pesar de que él aún continúa necesitando ayuda para

seguir mejorando, hoy en día cualquier persona podría mantener una conversación con él y evidenciar como el apoyo de la escuela ha impactado no solo en su vida, sino también en la nuestra como familia. Pero nada de esto habría sido posible si la escuela no contaría con los recursos necesarios. Patricio es un niño que siempre esta feliz, a pesar de sus limitaciones, el nunca se rinde, ni se frustra ante las adversidades, es amable y muy generoso, él tiene fe en que mejorará; pero no podría hacerlo sin la ayuda de los maravillosos maestros y de todos los servicios y el apoyo que recibe de la escuela. Es por esto que, les pido por favor que consideren, que cualquier cambio en el presupuesto escolar que pueda afectar a los servicios que mi hijo y otros niños están recibiendo es devastador para ellos, para su futuro y para nosotros como familias, porque estos fondos no son un gasto, son una inversión, son la garantía de que día a día mejora su calidad de vida y de que en el futuro mi hijo sea un hombre autosuficiente, alguien que puede valerse por si mismo y contribuir en el crecimiento de este país. Además, su mejora constante y todo el apoyo que recibe de la escuela nos permite a nosotros como padres también destinar todas nuestras fuerzas a trabajar y contribuir con nuestro trabajo a esta comunidad. El presupuesto destinado para programas de educación especial y otros programas escolares garantizan que niños como Patricio, con potencial para mejorar, en el futuro no sean una carga para el estado. Para familias como la nuestra, recibir noticias acerca del presupuesto escolar, no es solo ver una cifra más, porque estamos convencidos que cada dólar del presupuesto es una oportunidad para que mi hijo pueda desarrollarse, seguir aprendiendo y soñar como otros niños, con un futuro lleno de posibilidades. El solo hecho de que exista la posibilidad de que, debido a la falta de financiación, el distrito no pueda mantener los programas y la dotación de personal es devastador, es desalentador. Por favor sigan apoyando y protegiendo los fondos destinados a la educación especial, porque cada dólar del presupuesto invertido en un niño que necesita apoyo como Patricio, hay una familia que lucha y un futuro que solo dependerá de la oportunidad que ustedes puedan brindarle a mi hijo para superar sus limitaciones y mejorar. Les agradezco por leer mi carta, por conocer nuestra historia y por todo el trabajo que han realizado y que espero continuan haciendo en el futuro para ayudar a mi hijo y a otros niños como él. Aprovecho la oportunidad para expresar mi profundo agradecimiento a Silvermine Elementary School por cambiar la vida de mi hijo, por quererlo tanto, por apoyarlo, por hacer todo para que el crezca con muchas oportunidades. Les agradezco con todo mi corazón. Me despido de ustedes, deseándoles muchos éxitos en su gestión. Saludos cordiales **Gabriela Carrillo**

- SUBJECT: Fully Fund the Norwalk Board of Education FY2026-27 Budget Request Dear Common Council Members, I am the parent of a student who attends Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School. My goal is for her to become bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English with a focus on global studies. I

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believe there are key benefits to learning two languages simultaneously. For instance, enhanced brain function, cognitive flexibility, increased self-confidence and improved communication; all leading to better future career opportunities. I respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education's request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high quality education, including strong district-level supports that are especially critical in the areas of curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the people who educate and support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely, **Joyce Gomez**

- Dear Common Council Members, I am writing to respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education's request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high-quality education, including strong district-level supports that are especially critical in the areas of curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the people who educate and support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the

city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely **Janeth Chica** Mother of a 5th grader from Silvermine Elementary School

- February 11, 2026 SUBJECT: Fully Fund the Norwalk Board of Education FY2026–27 Budget Request Dear Common Council Members, I am writing to respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education's request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high-quality education, including strong district-level supports that are especially critical in the areas of curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the people who educate and support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely, **Monica Ceja**
- Dear Common Council Members I am writing to respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education's request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high-quality education, including strong district-level support that are especially critical in the areas of curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the people who educate and

support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely, **Maryann Jankowski** PTA President Silvermine Dual Language Magnet School

- Dear Common Council Members I am writing to respectfully ask that the Norwalk Board of Education receive the full 6.5% increase in funding requested for the FY2026–27 budget. Over the past several years, Norwalk Public Schools have already had to make difficult cuts to important positions. Fully funding the Board of Education's request would allow the district to maintain the programs and services that families have come to expect and that students need to thrive. Our teachers, principals, paraeducators, secretaries, and all school staff do so much for our children each day. They deserve adequate resources and support to continue providing a high-quality education, including strong district-level support, especially in curriculum and special education. Together, they form a network of dedicated educators who promote strong leadership and ensure our schools have the guidance and resources they need to succeed. Fully funding this request would send a clear message that the Norwalk community values and stands behind the educators and support staff who educate and support our students. We want to live in a community where children feel supported, valued, and set up for success. Fully funding the Norwalk Board of Education's budget request would go a long way toward demonstrating that commitment. Thank you for taking the time to consider my comments. I hope the city can find a solution that adequately funds our schools so they can preserve and maintain our excellent teachers, outstanding support services, and all those working to ensure student success—for the benefit of the entire Norwalk community. Sincerely, **Cerissa R. Orbegoso** First and Third grade parent Silvermine SGC and PTA member

#### IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dellinger moved to adjourn.  
Motion passed unanimously.  
The meeting was adjourned at 7:05p.m.