

May 2 Special Finance Committee Meeting

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To: input, public <publicinput@hamden.org>

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Dear Members of the Hamden Board of Education,

Good evening and thank you for the time and effort you put into making sure Hamden students receive an outstanding education.

I am a parent of a 3rd grader at Church St. School and our family has directly advocated to fully fund the school budget to the Legislative Council during the budget hearing and to individual members via email, direct meetings, and videoconferences.

I understand that tragically, a deficit in the budget is imminent, although the magnitude of the deficit remains to be seen, and that you need to make important decisions to keep the school district running.

As you prepare the mitigation plan, I ask you to be mindful and fully aware of how the decisions you take may disproportionately affect low-income families.

For example, in the last few years, we have seen the equity funds removed from the budget, which were meant to help schools with a higher proportion of parents that could not donate to their PTA's for school activities. This translated into less extra-curricular enrichment for children of Title I schools. We have also seen the cost of daytime busses used for field trips become now the burden of families and PTAs. And just last month, we have seen a change of school start time due to the high cost of bussing, which will result in some of our families now absorbing the costs of before-school care programs.

My understanding is that Title 1 schools have small class sizes which has shown to be effective in reducing the learning gap of those students. Our children are still recovering from severe learning loss and the social and emotional impacts of the COVID pandemic. Moving to larger class sizes would be a step backwards and significantly impact the progress achieved with students at these schools.

Closing schools? How will you choose which one? How fast can that be done? Our previous experience has shown that the louder, more powerful, and more connected voices usually get their way, and Title 1 schools like Church St. are usually underrepresented among those voices. If you were forced to close a school building, my suggestion is to come down to each school, walk through the building during school hours, experience the community, gather with the families and provide all the information and a detailed plan, and that the closing of a school should happen simultaneously with redistricting, as part of an equitable plan. Please stop delaying redistricting and design a comprehensive plan now. Such a plan can help you save the money desperately needed for the years to come.

I am asking you, to strive to have a long-term plan. PLAN, COMMUNICATE, AND TAKE ACTION. Our families need stability, they need to know that redistricting is happening, when and how. Please work together with

the Legislative Council to ensure our children get the education they deserve.

Thank you.

Andrea Gloria-Soria

Church St. School Parent