



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Preserving Important Programs and Supporting Our Teachers - BOE & BOF

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 2:38 PM

Please post and forward to BOF and BOS.

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Mary Coburn** <mary.roepke@outlook.com>

Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 8:28AM

Subject: Preserving Important Programs and Supporting Our Teachers - BOE & BOF

To: sousaj@newhtfd.org <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, albertm@newhtfd.org <albertm@newhtfd.org>, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, kleppst@newhtfd.org <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, buzzit@newhtfd.org <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, millerp@newhtfd.org <millerp@newhtfd.org>, youngk@newhtfd.org <youngk@newhtfd.org>, russellt@newhtfd.org <russellt@newhtfd.org>, tindalld@newhtfd.org <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, perottie@newhtfd.org <perottie@newhtfd.org>, Mary Coburn <mary.roepke@outlook.com>

Dear Members of the New Hartford Board of Education and Board of Finance,

My name is Mary Coburn, and I am a parent of four children in the community. I went to school for Psychology with a background in Early Childhood Development. I also run a preschool in town and have a CT-AIMH Endorsement for Infant and Young Child Mental Health. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the potential elimination of critical programs such as Band, Chorus, the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program, Math Olympiad, and essential support position that helps our teachers focus on teaching rather than overwhelming administrative tasks. These programs and positions have played a significant role in the education of my own children, helping to nurture their self-confidence, self-esteem, and love of learning. I know many other families who share these sentiments and feel equally impacted.

The district's current five-year strategic plan aims to improve school climate to allow teachers and students to maximize their potential in a positive learning environment. However, taking away

programs like Band, TAG, and Math Olympiad, along with essential support positions that help teachers focus on students rather than overwhelming prep work, will do the exact opposite.

Music and the Arts, like Band, are so much more than extracurricular activities. They help children build self-esteem, creativity, and cognitive skills. I have seen firsthand how participating in Band has helped my children grow more confident and comfortable expressing themselves. Two of my four children who struggle with dyslexia and dysgraphia learning to read sheet music was a feat that they are incredibly proud of. Cutting these programs would strip away opportunities that nurture personal growth and emotional well-being—essential components of a positive school climate.

If Band is made into an afterschool program, many children will be excluded from participating, and families who do participate will be forced to seek expensive lessons outside of school. The dedication of our music teachers cannot be overstated. Spend just a moment around our band teacher, and you'll see someone who is always smiling, excited, and driven her passion for band and music flowing out around her. My children are currently coming home inspired, writing songs and poetry because of how chorus has stimulated their creativity. Losing our passionate, dedicated music teachers would be a tremendous loss that would be felt for years to come. If you move Band to afterschool hours, you risk losing some of the biggest assets in our schools—the teachers.

The TAG and Math Olympiad programs provide advanced learners with the challenges they need to stay engaged and excited. Many of history's brightest minds and influential innovators were given opportunities like these as children. People like Albert Einstein, Katherine Johnson, and Bill Gates thrived because they were challenged to push boundaries and think creatively. Without these opportunities, many students will feel neglected or unstimulated, which can lead to frustration and disengagement.

I have witnessed firsthand how my children felt lost and disengaged before reaching the grades where they could participate in these activities. This year, they are creating inventions, collaborating with others, and turning their ideas into tangible projects. It's been thrilling to see them learn and grow through these experiences. Investing in all levels of education is essential to maintaining the strongest, most effective school system possible.

Support positions that assist teachers with planning, preparation, and administrative tasks are critical. Without this help, teachers will be stretched too thin, forced to spend valuable time on tedious prep work instead of teaching and supporting our children. This burden will only lead to burnout and force talented teachers to leave. Children today are vastly different from previous generations shaped by technology, societal changes, and more. Teaching has become significantly harder, and more is required of our educators. Taking away essential support will only hurt the entire education system.

If we are serious about improving our school climate and giving students the best possible chance to thrive, we must preserve these vital programs and the support systems that allow our teachers to focus on what matters most our children, the very ones who will one day guide us into the future.

There are many things parents can take pride in when it comes to our school system. Having a Blue Ribbon High School is a testament to the strength and quality of the education provided at all levels, starting from our elementary and middle schools. Almost everyone I meet who is trying to move into our highly sought-after district, or who has already moved here, says it's because of our school system. I hear this time and time again, and I am deeply involved in our community. I know many families who would seriously reconsider staying here if our schools no longer offered the challenging, engaging, and top-tier education that makes our district so special.

We must step back and consider the bigger picture—the long-term future and success of our entire district.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I hope you will seriously consider the importance of keeping these programs and supports intact for the benefit of our students, teachers, and the entire community. To further support the need for these vital programs, I encourage you to review the district's strategic plan for 2022-2027 a link under the word MISSION on <https://antolini.newhtfd.org/>.

I also would like to add that I do not believe this burden should fall entirely on the Board of Education. The Board of Finance must step up and meet these essential programs halfway at the very least, by yes raising the taxes slightly. What we are asking for is a modest increase—equivalent to the cost of just a few cups of coffee for the approximately 4,000 taxpayers in this school system.

Thank you,

Mary Coburn-Roepke



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Follow up letter concerning budget

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 2:27 PM

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Michelle McCoy** <mccoym@newhtfd.org>

Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 2:06 PM

Subject: Follow up letter concerning budget

To: Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, Timothy Klepps <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, cc: Tom Buzzi <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, Penny Miller <millerp@newhtfd.org>, Frank Rodenberg <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, Meagan Albert <albertm@newhtfd.org>, Erik Perotti <perottie@newhtfd.org>, Timothy Russell <russellt@newhtfd.org>, Deirdre Tindall <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, Kristin Young <youngk@newhtfd.org>, Christine Hayward <CHayward@newhartfordct.gov>, kerryguilfoyle@gmail.com <kerryguilfoyle@gmail.com>

To: The New Hartford Board of Education

Dear Board Members and Mr. Sousa,

After listening to the 'Public Comment' at the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, I feel the need to send a follow-up letter regarding the clerical aide position.

It occurred to me that most of the board members, and perhaps even Mr. Sousa, may be unaware of an important piece of information. Originally, there were two Instructional Aides in the district. About nine years ago, during a similar budget meeting, the Instructional Aide positions were slated for removal. After passionate pleas from our primary schools, the board ultimately decided to cut the position here at Antolini while sustaining it at Bakerville and New Hartford Elementary. As a result, we at Antolini were forced to absorb the work mainly done by the IA among the paraprofessionals, the office staff, and, primarily, the

classroom teachers. I have seen firsthand the extra work the loss of that position has caused the building and faculty as a whole.

Now, we are faced with the prospect of eliminating another position that benefits the entire school. My concern is that Antolini is at risk of losing yet another position that helps support the largest number of students and staff in the district, as well as Oak Hill. This would further disrupt the balance of office support relative to the student/staff ratio. The clerical aide position provides essential support to both the office and the entire staff. I implore you to reconsider this decision and not allow Antolini to once again bear the brunt of these budget cuts. It has been proven that the office at Antolini cannot function properly with only one person.

On another note, I strongly support keeping our band and music program here at Antolini. I firmly believe it is one of the programs that reaches the largest number of students. Students who may never have known about a talent they possess are given the opportunity to explore a new avenue. My daughters started their musical journey here at Antolini and continued with their love of music through Northwest Regional and even throughout their college careers. While I have never played an instrument or sung in a chorus, I am grateful that the music program at Antolini School fostered that passion in them.

Sincerely,

Shelly McCoy

--

*Shelly McCoy
Clerical Aide
Ann Antolini School*



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Budget Proposal - Education

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 3:24 PM

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent New Hartford Public Schools

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kristen Bakula** <ckbakula@yahoo.com>

Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 6:06 PM

Subject: Budget Proposal - Education

To: Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, albertm@newhtfd.org
<albertm@newhtfd.org>, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>,
kleppst@newhtfd.org <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, buzzit@newhtfd.org
<buzzit@newhtfd.org>, millerp@newhtfd.org <millerp@newhtfd.org>,
youngk@newhtfd.org <youngk@newhtfd.org>, russellt@newhtfd.org
<russellt@newhtfd.org>, tindalld@newhtfd.org <tindalld@newhtfd.org>,
perottie@newhtfd.org <perottie@newhtfd.org>, town@newhartfordct.gov
<town@newhartfordct.gov>Kristen Bakula
272 Steele Road
New Hartford, CT 06057
ckbakula@yahoo.com
(860) 485-4792

March 21, 2025

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you today as both a concerned parent and taxpayer regarding the proposed budget cuts to our educational programs, specifically those that impact the arts and gifted education. As you are aware, the proposed cuts threaten the funding for vital programs such as band, chorus, the talented and gifted (TAG) program, and Math Olympiads, and I feel it is important to share

my concerns about how these reductions will impact our students, families including my own, and the community as a whole.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand the positive impact these programs have had on my child and others in our community. Participation in the band has provided my child with a sense of belonging, creativity, and discipline that extends well beyond the classroom. These programs offer more than just an outlet for artistic expression—they foster teamwork, perseverance, and personal growth. Similarly, the TAG program and Math Olympiads challenge students to think critically, engage in complex problem-solving, and develop a love for learning that will serve them throughout their lives. My two children have looked forward to the opportunity to expand their mathematical skills as two active participants in the Math Olympiads program this past year and would be extremely disappointed to find the opportunity to further their intellectual curiosity was not available to them through this program in the future.

Reducing funding for these programs would significantly limit the opportunities available to students who have the potential to excel in these areas. Cutting resources for the arts and gifted programs would not only diminish the diversity of educational experiences available to students but would also limit our ability to nurture well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society. Additionally, these programs play a critical role in providing a balanced education—one that fosters both academic rigor and creative exploration.

I understand that difficult financial decisions must sometimes be made, but I firmly believe that cuts to these programs would be a short-sighted choice with long-lasting consequences. The arts and gifted education programs are not luxuries—they are integral to a well-rounded, high-quality education. Rather than eliminating these opportunities, I urge you to explore other avenues for budgetary adjustments that will not compromise the future of our children and their ability to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Without these programs, we risk limiting the potential of our children and weakening the overall quality of education within our district.

I strongly urge you to reconsider the proposed cuts to these programs and work towards finding solutions that protect the opportunities that students need to grow intellectually, creatively, and emotionally. A strong education system requires support for all students, from those pursuing artistic expression to those seeking academic challenges.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I sincerely hope that you will stand with parents, students, and the broader community in protecting the

educational programs that are so vital to our children's future.

Sincerely,

Kristen Bakula

272 Steele Road
New Hartford, CT 06057



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: 2025-2026 Proposed School Budget

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 3:24 PM

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent New Hartford Public Schools

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **April Pike** <avril6985@hotmail.com>
Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 8:58 PM
Subject: 2025-2026 Proposed School Budget
To: sousaj@newhtfd.org <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, albertm@newhtfd.org <albertm@newhtfd.org>, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, kleppst@newhtfd.org <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, buzzit@newhtfd.org <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, millerp@newhtfd.org <millerp@newhtfd.org>, youngk@newhtfd.org <youngk@newhtfd.org>, russellt@newhtfd.org <russellt@newhtfd.org>, tindalld@newhtfd.org <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, perottie@newhtfd.org <perottie@newhtfd.org>

Dear New Hartford Board of Education Members and Mr. Sousa,

Thank you for your time and dedication to our schools. I appreciate the effort you have put into the budget proposals, knowing the challenges that come with these difficult decisions.

As a New Hartford resident and mother of two school-aged children, I am deeply saddened by the proposed staff and band/chorus cuts. I am in favor for an overall increase in the budget to allow for these programs to continue. One of the main reasons we chose to move to New Hartford was the quality of its schools. With the proposed staff reductions including the instructional assistant and clerical aid, these valuable aspects of our school system could be significantly impacted if teachers are now needing to spend more time away from their classrooms to help prepare their curriculums without help.

Additionally, the potential elimination of band and chorus as part of the school day is very concerning. Moving these programs to an after-school activity may make it difficult for some children to participate, limiting their access to music education. My son, Ayden who is currently in fourth grade, has been eagerly looking forward to playing an instrument for the past two years. Removing this opportunity from the school day would be a major disappointment for students like him.

Music plays a crucial role in children's social and emotional development, fostering creativity, teamwork, and confidence. Taking away this opportunity would be damaging to our students.

While I understand the need for fiscal responsibility, I urge you to reconsider these cuts and explore alternative solutions that take into account the concerns of residents, parents, and teachers.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

April Pike

85 Town Hill Road

New Hartford Connecticut

Dear Mr. Klepps,

I'm writing concerning the proposed budget cuts for the New Hartford Schools. I realize that the Board of Education needs to be fiscally responsible, but my understanding is that they are also supposed to keep the better interests of the students in mind.

I'm going to specifically discuss one specific budget cut you are proposing. Let me provide some context. I was the chairperson of the NWR7 Music Parents Association for 10 years when our children were students at the middle and high schools. Both were avid musicians, and started their instrumental music studies at Antolini School. They were in the band there, as well as at the Middle and High Schools. In addition, both played at the Hartt School Precollege ensembles (Greater Hartford Youth Wind Ensemble, and Connecticut Youth Symphony). They were seated in the All State and Regional ensembles every year they were in Middle and High Schools. Our son also played in a number of auditioned ensembles and summer programs. Both continue to play their instruments as adults. Our son is a professional freelance musician, and our daughter continues to play her instruments for pleasure.

There is no doubt that our children would not have been competitive musicians for any of the ensembles if they hadn't started their instrumental studies at Antolini School. The vast majority of instrumentalists doing auditions for outside ensembles have studied their instrument and played in ensembles since elementary school. We were very grateful our children had this opportunity. In addition to building music skills, they learned commitment, working as part of a group, taking clear direction, and enjoyment of instrumental music. I don't think any of these things should be lost on future students.

There is much research about the benefits of music education, and how this impacts overall learning, and the whole person.

For the life of me, I don't understand how cutting the Antolini Band would even be a consideration in your budget talks. This should be high on the list of programs to maintain, and grow, not eliminate.

I strongly urge you to reconsider this cut in your budget. I think it's very short sighted, and not in the best interest of our students.

I should add, I'm still a resident of this community, and no longer have children in the schools. Nevertheless, I would urge you to maintain the elementary instrumental music program and band program.

Sincerely,

Shelley Lloyd
[29 Pioneer Drive](#)
[New Hartford, CT 06057](#)

To: The Board of Education and The Board of Finance

Dear Board Members,

I appreciate how much care is being put into the budget of New Hartford schools this year. I am invested in this year's budget in two ways; as an employee and as a parent. My husband and I moved to New Hartford in 2008 planning ahead that this is where we would love to raise a family and the school system was reason number one. We both grew up in Harwinton and agreed that this town would give our children different opportunities than we had. The teachers and staff are phenomenal, and incredibly dedicated to the children in the schools. Until this year, I hadn't realized how dangerously close our children are to losing opportunities that my husband and I both had growing up. I was a part of our band program for seven years and joined the high school marching band. This time in band created long lasting, amazing friendships, and a feeling of belonging to something passionate that has carried on into my adult life. Chorus did the same thing for me and I am forever grateful.

Both of our children have a love for music and singing and I was really looking forward to them joining something that we had growing up. As an artist myself, I will always advocate for the arts, in many capacities, as being one of the most important experiences of a young person's life. All of the arts help a child's development cognitively, creatively, boosts their self-esteem as well as fostering their social-emotional maturity. It also improves fine-motor skills and their math and science skills learning about shapes and spatial reasoning and making comparisons. The arts are also an important outlet for many kids and it's something that they will carry on into adulthood as a safe way to express themselves. My husband is a veteran and now a quality engineer and the way his brain is stimulated is different than mine. He would have benefited from programs like TAG and Math Olympiad's growing up. It would have given him the math and problem-solving skills that he learned in the army and now at his courant job, at an earlier age. It wasn't until learning in a very serious way, being deployed overseas in the army and then in college that he really was able to develop and advance his talent with numbers, problem solving and efficiency. We both share our loves from all sides of learning with our kids and we need the schools help to provide the missing pieces of community and inclusivity in all areas where kids are talented.

I urge you to please reconsider closing these programs and encourage our community to rally together and provide for these kids who we love and are our future. We all want the best for our children and I think all New Hartford residents would agree. If there was a breakdown of how much a higher budget would cost residents yearly, they would be more willing to agree and support a higher percentage for our budget. Encouraging parents to join the PTO or at the very least share ways to raise money for our school is a step in the right direction.

Respectively,
Greta Lindquist-Merlino

Matt Flaherty
162 Southeast Road
New Hartford, CT 06057

March 24, 2025

To the Board of Education:

My name is Matt Flaherty, and I am a taxpayer with three children currently enrolled in the New Hartford Public Schools. I am writing to ask that the Boards of Education and Finance reconsider the proposed education budget for the 2025/2026 year. I am not only concerned by the magnitude of cuts proposed this year but also disappointed with the year-over-year trajectory of the education budget. It is clear that the drastic measures identified in the proposed budget have been several years in the making.

For the past few years, Superintendent Sousa has proposed reasonable budgets that account for capital needs and rising costs associated with contractually negotiated obligations while simply maintaining academic programs and instructional services. Each request has been met with a directive to reduce spending and find cuts. Managing increased obligatory costs with constant cuts to academic programs, instructional services, and staff is neither responsible nor sustainable. The painful cuts now under consideration, coupled with the district's difficulties in responding to unanticipated costs, are the result of continued underfunding, and it's little wonder that maintaining the status quo would require an 8.89% spending increase. Directing the district to bring its request in line with or below the state average of 5% is inconsistent with its mission of inspiring and preparing "all children to become independent and enthusiastic learners who achieve personal excellence by providing a challenging and exemplary education." An "average" or below average budget, with chronic cuts to instructional services and meaningful academic programming such as music, is not a reflection of excellence in education but rather mediocrity. Is that really the standard our community holds for its students and future?

I appreciate that both boards are faced with "difficult decisions" and that Board of Education members never wish to cut administrative and instructional staff, academic programming, and support services. But for several years, that has been the response to increased costs, many of which are known obligations and capital improvements. In their respective deliberations, both boards allow conversations to be driven by voices that see education as a burden rather than an asset worthy of investment. At what point will the Board of Education advocate for the learning needs of students and our community's families, who are also part of New Hartford's tax base, and defend the district's budget needs and the quality of education in New Hartford?

With the dismantling of public education at the federal level, funding will become increasingly difficult for states and local governments of all demographics. Difficult decisions will not become easier. Both remedial interventions and special education will likely become more costly. Cutting instructional staff and failing to fund counseling in the face of that likelihood is shortsighted and will have predictable outcomes in student performance. Directing the district to pursue disappearing "creative funding" opportunities will not be a viable solution to problems that lie ahead, and there is little left to cut.

I plan to vote no on the proposed budget if it moves forward to referendum. Please understand that at least one vote against your proposal is not a rejection of the nearly 5% increase in spending but a vote against the continued disinvestment in public education and our community's children.

Thank you,

Matt Flaherty

To the New Hartford Board of Education and Board of Finance,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for the position of clerical aide, which has been an invaluable position at Antolini School. I understand that not every position and program can be saved in the most recent proposed budget, and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the significant contributions and value that our clerical aide brings to the school.

As I hope you are aware, our clerical aide has many responsibilities that are invaluable to our school. In addition to managing daily office operations, they handle the communication of important messages to staff, manage student crises, and coordinate pickup passes to ensure each student gets home in the correct manner, despite in the moment changes at dismissal time. They are responsible for school and student safety by determining who is allowed in and out of the school. They coordinate building substitutes, organize funding to alleviate the cost of field trips, record necessary data in our Powerschool program and support the staff with preparation of curriculum materials when necessary. The clerical aide's ability to manage multiple tasks efficiently and maintain a positive and professional environment has made them a key asset to our team.

Furthermore, our clerical aide has an integral role in making sure the Antolini office runs smoothly and efficiently. Our clerical aide and administrative assistant work as a team, along with our building principal, taking care of all the behind the scenes operations. They alleviate some of the more timely responsibilities that the administrative assistant is tasked with, and while they work as a cohesive unit, this is only possible because there are two people sharing the responsibilities of managing the Antolini office. Frankly, the range of tasks that must be accomplished on a daily/weekly/monthly basis in the office is too much for one person to successfully handle. Losing such a skilled and experienced team member, such as our clerical aide, could result in increased administrative burdens on other staff members, leading to potential delays and decreased productivity in day to day operations.

I understand that tough decisions need to be made in any organization, but I truly believe that preserving this position is of the utmost benefit to our school and its community in the long run. I am confident that maintaining the clerical aide position at Antolini School is necessary to contribute to our continued success as a school community.

On a more personal note, the staff member currently in this position, Shelly McCoy, has had one of the greatest impacts in my experience at Antolini School, and she has had a significant role in shaping me into the educator that I am today. Without her knowledge and expertise, I would not have been able to navigate my first year of teaching (during the height of covid) as easily as I did. Her dedication to the New Hartford Public Schools community is truly remarkable. The years of experience and knowledge that she has, of Antolini School especially, is invaluable, and I believe it would be a disservice to our staff and students if we lost a person like her.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider my perspective. I would be happy to discuss further how maintaining the clerical aide position would have continued value in our schools. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Haley Dutlinger
Third Grade Teacher
Ann Antolini Elementary School

March 20, 2025

Dear New Hartford Board of Finance and Board of Education,

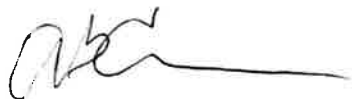
I am writing today to express my concern with the proposed '25-'26 budget cuts to the school budget, especially as it will directly affect my two children, currently enrolled at Ann Antolini School.

It is my belief that many of these cuts will have detrimental effects to New Hartford children's ability to thrive and succeed, and to feel supported during their school experience. We all know about the rise of mental health issues among students in these formative years – anxiety, depression, and more. Eliminating resources like the school counselor and CJR will remove important supports that students need *more* of, not less. Both of my children have accessed services through the schools that have significantly improved their mental and emotional wellbeing. My daughter, Luna, has this year been working closely with Shayla Vu, the school counselor at Antolini, and counts her sessions with Ms. Vu as the highlights of her school days, where she can feel free to express emotions and work on solutions to issues, such as anxiety during test taking, and learn coping skills for handling challenging emotions. Luna has been applying the strategies she has learned, and her academic performance has markedly improved, and she has reported decreased anxiety overall. Our family – as well as I'm sure dozens of others – would be extremely disappointed to see these channels disappear.

Activities such as band, chorus, and White Memorial offer valuable opportunities to enrich students' learning, collaborate with peers, and find joy in their school experience. My son, Dexter – one of the student representatives to the Board of Education – has immensely enjoyed being a part of the 5th and 6th grade band; Luna, now in 3rd grade, has been asking since her first day at Antolini when she'll have the chance to join the band and chorus. Should these programs be eliminated, she would be heartbroken to know that she was not allowed the same wonderful opportunities that her brother was afforded.

I urge you to reconsider these cuts. While I realize that changes must be made somewhere to compensate, these programs in particular are worth saving, even at the expense of higher taxes on residents to ensure that all New Hartford children have the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.



Ashley Cerruto

110 Arrowhead Drive

New Hartford, CT 06057

March 19, 2025

To New Hartford Board of Finance,

I am deeply concerned about the potential elimination of band programs and school counselors. Both play a crucial role in student development.

Band fosters creativity, discipline, and teamwork, while school counselors provide essential support for students' mental health and academic success.

Removing these resources would negatively impact students' well-being and future opportunities. I urge you to reconsider and find alternative solutions that prioritize their needs.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our schools.



Garrit Cerruto, PMHNP
GXC Behavioral Health
110 Arrowhead Drive
New Hartford, CT 06057

Dear Board of Education –

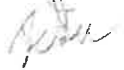
I do not think that the budget cuts are a good idea. Band truly helped me grow as a student, with learning a new skill and socializing with the band teacher and other band members. It is always something that I look forward to, practicing and then also the concerts. I think it is beneficial more than ever to have the chance to learn musical instruments, it is good for our mental health and is also fun to see friends outside of classes. If band is cut, the fifth graders below us will never get to have a band concert, and the fourth graders below them will never have the chance to learn how to play an instrument. My sister is in third grade and has been looking forward to joining band ever since second grade, I would feel really bad if she couldn't do it. If chorus is canceled, that would make it so kids don't have the chance to express their emotions through singing, or spend time with their friends and having a good time out of the classroom. Also I feel I have gotten a lot out of seeing the school counselors over the years, they have helped me get through a lot of hard times and given me strategies that I still use to this day. I feel like they have made a really good impact on my life and that every student should be able to feel that way.

For these reasons, I disagree with the budget cuts. I hope you make a decision that is beneficial for all students by keeping these important things.

Thank you.

Dexter Cerruto

6th Grade Representative to the Board of Ed



3/18/2025

To the members of the Board of Education:

My name is Marcia Jones. I live at 298 Ramstein Road, and have lived in New Hartford for 40 years. I have seven grown children who all attended New Hartford schools and Northwestern Regional 7, and I am currently raising a granddaughter who is 9 years old, in 4th grade at Antolini School and part of the Special Education program. I am also the Instructional Assistant at Bakerville School and New Hartford Elementary School, and have held this position for almost 14 years.

I have already written and sent you all a letter stating my feelings about the cuts being proposed for the 2025-26 budget. I would like to take a moment to thank the Board and the Superintendent's office for posting all the letters many of us have written regarding these proposed cuts. I personally appreciate your time and energy to do this, and encourage the public to read these letters, as they are important and enlightening to our current budget situation,

I am particularly highlighting here the proposed cut of the Instructional Assistant, and feel compelled to speak directly to this position, because I believe there may be a lack of information and perhaps even misconception regarding what this position actually entails.

In many districts, the phrase "instructional assistant" and "paraeducator" are interchanged. Not so in New Hartford. While I am a qualified paraeducator, I took this particular job 14 years ago as a separate entity, with a separate set of guidelines and expectations, because I believe the instructors in our schools need the support it offers them. Instead of working IN the classroom supporting the instructors as they teach, I work outside of the classroom, supporting the instructors much as the Administrative Assistants support the Administrators. I perform a myriad of tasks for our instructors, including copying, organizing, creating, prepping, sorting, filing, laminating, brainstorming, facilitating and effectively managing all their needs in order to support their teaching. I also work directly with the Curriculum Director producing massive quantities of manipulatives needed to support and fuel our ever-changing curriculums.

My strengths lie in multitasking, organization and time-management, specific requirements for the job I do, and I utilize every minute of my 5 hours each day to get these jobs done,

But when help is needed for duties such as lunch or recess or door duty, literally anything at all, I am always readily available for whatever is needed and more than willing to take time out of my full workday to do so. I am also one of only two substitutes trained and capable of substituting for the three Administrative Assistants in our primary schools and have done so frequently at any time and for any length of time, whether they are called away from their desks, need to leave for a period of time, or have to be out for days or even weeks at a time. This substitute requirement is very specific in relation to knowledge of Power School, the phone system, and most importantly, school security and student privacy. The average substitute, while fully capable of substituting for a classroom para or a classroom teacher, does not have the training to manage the Administrative Assistant position. I am capable and confident in my ability to manage that position and am always available to them, even last-minute, as, coincidentally, just recently happened.

I sincerely hope I have managed here to enlighten and clarify the duties of the Instructional Assistant and that I've shown how important and needed this position is. I ask that you consider my statement here and reconsider the decision to eliminate this position. I speak not for myself, personally, although I truly love my job, but for the position itself, as I truly feel what the position does for our teachers directly relates to their ability to stay in their classrooms, focus on their teaching and their students and thereby maintain a calm, organized and productive classroom.

Thank you for your time.

Marcia Jones



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Letter in support of increasing the school budget

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Wed, Mar 19, 2025 at 10:05 AM

For 4/8/25 BOE meeting.

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Peter & Essie Humphrey** <pehumphrey273@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Mar 18, 2025 at 4:48 PM
Subject: Letter in support of increasing the school budget
To:
Cc: <albertm@newhtfd.org>, <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, <millerp@newhtfd.org>, <perottie@newhtfd.org>, <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, <russellt@newhtfd.org>, <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, <youngk@newhtfd.org>, Christine Hayward <chayward@newhartfordct.gov>, <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, Dan Jerram (<DJerram@newhartfordct.gov>)

Peter & Essie Humphrey
[Niles Road](#)
[New Hartford, CT 06057](#)
pehumphrey273@gmail.com

March 18th, 2025

New Hartford Board of Education
P.O. Box 315
New Hartford, CT 06057
Sent via email with copies to First Selectman Jerram and Superintendent Sousa

Dear Chairman Klepps and Members of the New Hartford Board of Education,

New Hartford is known for having excellent schools and we need to advocate for the current children of our town to continue to have the opportunity to receive such an excellent educational experience. With that in mind, we write to you to express our concerns regarding the anticipated changes proposed in the school budget as currently written and approved by the Board of Education on March 11, 2025.

Dear Board of Education,

Please find our letter in support of increasing the school budget. Even though we do not have children in the school system, we support the increases to help all of the children in our town succeed. Additionally, strong schools translate into higher property values.

Specifically, budget reductions that raise our concern include but are not limited to:

- Instructional Assistant FTE
- Clerical Aide FTE
- General Music FTE & White Memorial.
- Budget for the Talented & Gifted and Math Olympiad Programs

The proposed loss of FTEs and programs is not in line with the mission of the New Hartford Public Schools. These proposed budget reductions eliminate important positions and programs that are core to the educational mission of the New Hartford Public School System.

We also encourage the Board of Education to discuss with the Board of Finance and the broader Town of New Hartford the cost drivers in today's schools and the tax rates that are needed to fulfill the mission of our schools.

Even though we do not have children in the schools, we support the necessary spending to fulfill the mission of the New Hartford Public Schools even if that means raising the tax rates.

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring the mission of the New Hartford Public Schools is fulfilled.

Peter and Essie Humphrey



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: BOE meeting - budget concerns

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>

Wed, Mar 19, 2025 at 10:06 AM

To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

For 4/8/25 BOE meeting.
Please post all letters online.

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Shannon Dibella** <shanndb@yahoo.com>

Date: Tue, Mar 18, 2025 at 5:51 PM

Subject: BOE meeting - budget concerns

To: <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, <albertm@newhtfd.org>, <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, <millerp@newhtfd.org>, <perottie@mewhtfd.org>, <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, <russellt@newhtfd.org>, <tindald@newhtfd.org>, <youngk@newhtfd.org>Cc: <djerram@newhtfd.ct.gov>, <sousaj@newhtfd.org>

Dear New Hartford Board of Education members,

I hope this email finds you all well. I am writing to express my concerns over the anticipated school budget changes, as many other parents are.

Specifically, budget reductions that raise my concern include but are NOT limited to:

Instructional Assistant FTE; Clerical Aide FTE; Field trips; General Music.

I strongly support increasing the overall budget as needed to provide all students, both in the general and special education curriculums, important educational opportunities and support. Proposing the elimination of important positions and programs that are core to the mission of the district seems unreasonable, and to my mind, will worsen both the general and special education services offered. This will lead to worse outcomes in the future for all students, as well as the community as a whole.

I also want to emphasize that music is not just important academically but socially and emotionally, and benefits child development.

Thank you so much for your attention and service.

Respectfully,

Shannon Nicholas, LCSW
New Hartford, CT
shanndb@yahoo.com



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: New Hartford Elementary School Budget

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 2:32 PM

Please make sure that this is posted.

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **rina nazarov** <rnazar01@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 11:15AM
Subject: New Hartford Elementary School Budget
To: albertm@newhtfd.org <albertm@newhtfd.org>, buzzit@newhtfd.org <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, kleppst@newhtfd.org <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, millerp@newhtfd.org <millerp@newhtfd.org>, perottie@newhtfd.org <perottie@newhtfd.org>, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, russellt@newhtfd.org <russellt@newhtfd.org>, tindalld@newhtfd.org <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, youngk@newhtfd.org <youngk@newhtfd.org>, Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>

Dear Board of Education, Board of Finance, Superintendent Sousa, and First Selectman Jerram,

We are writing to plead with you to increase the budget for the New Hartford school system so that we will not have to eliminate current resources and programs crucial to the everyday function of our schools, teachers, and the development of our children. We currently have three children attending, and Rina is an alumni of the New Hartford School system.

We are shocked to learn that the 5th and 6th grade band and chorus would be cut under the current plan due to budget limitations. Rina played band at Antolini, and both the Band and Jazz Band at Regional. Chris played in the school and all-town orchestra in MA. Music was a large part of our early education and social experience at school, and we are excited for our children to enjoy the same. Strong music programs are a staple of a good school system. It has been demonstrated time and again that students involved in music

have an overall improvement in engagement, academics, and enjoyment at school. However, we are broken-hearted to think our kids will miss this invaluable experience under this proposed budget.

We are also grateful for school counselors Ms. Mailhot and Ms. Vu, and the support they gave to both of our children at Antolini. They detected issues which were invisible to the classroom teachers and provided small but game-changing support, which in particular for our daughter truly shifted her entire school experience. Their work helps teachers to better understand the behaviors and emotions of our children, enhancing their experience and education, especially for children at high risk.

Teaching in today's environment is not what it used to be. We expect more from our teachers and administrators than ever before. We live next door to the New Hartford Elementary school and often see teachers and other staff cars in the parking lot until 6 or 7pm. How can we justify adding more work to their already overburdened days? Yet under this proposed budget, several cuts include teaching materials, counselors, and administrative support staff.

While we would understand elimination of unnecessary positions, and the importance of fiscal responsibility, these cuts are instead clearly the result of difficult decisions to reduce the budget. For our family, and for many parents across New Hartford, the quality of the school system is so much more important than the few-thousand-dollars these cuts save. And once cut, school programs such as band become exponentially more difficult to reinstate. We moved from Massachusetts 5 years ago and stayed because New Hartford really seems to care about its children. Many school systems don't have the resources and those children and schools are struggling. You have the chance to maintain a top-tier school system here in New Hartford with minimal incremental investment, and it would be a tragic mistake to let this slip away. Please provide Dr. Sousa the additional funds needed to save these programs.

Sincerely,

Chris and Rina Sears

[50 Wickett St.](#)

[Pine Meadow, CT 06061](#)

[Yahoo Mail - Email Simplified](#)



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Boe letter

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 2:34 PM

Please post.

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent
New Hartford Public Schools
860.379.8546
Sousaj@newhtfd.org

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Timothy Klepps** <kleppst@newhtfd.org>

Date: Fri, Mar 21, 2025 at 11:01AM

Subject: Fwd: Boe letter

To: Jeff Sousa <Sousaj@newhtfd.org>, Tom Buzzi <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, Penny Miller <millerp@newhtfd.org>, Meagan Albert <albertm@newhtfd.org>, Erik Perotti <perottie@newhtfd.org>, Kristin Young <youngk@newhtfd.org>, Deirdre Tindall <tindald@newhtfd.org>, Timothy Russell <russellt@newhtfd.org>, Frank Rodenberg <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>

Begin forwarded message:

From: **Jaclyn Kostak** <jaclynkostak@gmail.com>

Date: March 21, 2025 at 9:37:30AM EST

To: kleppst@newhtfd.orgSubject: **Boe letter**

My name is Jaclyn Kostak. I live at 119 Arrowhead Drive. I'm writing in regard to the proposed 2025/2026 school budget cuts. I have a daughter, Sophia, in 5th grade at Antolini School and a son, Trevor, who will be starting kindergarten in the fall. Sophia has struggled with worry and confidence. She has been seeing the school counselors on and off since kindergarten. We have

always told her that there is always someone available, at school, to talk to if she has something bothering her. With the cut to the counseling services I'm afraid that may not longer be the case. This peace of mind and support has helped tremendously and I'd be disappointed if it were to change.

Sophia has grown so much over the years thanks to the wonderful programs offered at the New Hartford schools . She is in the tag program, chorus and band. She has really found her confidence through these activities. I fear that if they are removed from the schools then other children like Sophia will not find that passion and outlet at the right age. In these programs she has been encouraged to be creative and think to her full potential. When I told her these programs might not be there anymore she said to me "they are taking the fun out of school". This was so heartbreaking to hear, as she is a child who loves school and has really found her place through music. With my son Trevor starting school in the fall I fear he may not have the proper opportunities that he deserves. We moved to New Hartford for the wonderful schools and I am seeing that the education may not be as high of a priority to the town as I thought. This is disheartening. Please reconsider such cuts. Education should be priority. Always. These children are our future and deserve nothing but the best. Thank you for your time.

Sent from my iPhone

March 18, 2025

Dear Members of the New Hartford Board of Education,

I wanted to express my gratitude for the dedication and hard work of our teachers. As a parent of four children in grades K through 6, I have had wonderful experiences with every teacher my children have had during their time here. As an Assistant Principal and parent, I understand the challenges we face in education and see firsthand how budget cuts impact our children in all settings. Your efforts to advocate for our students are truly appreciated.

However, I am concerned about the continual reduction of opportunities for our children due to budget constraints, as requested by the Board of Education. I am particularly concerned about the reduction in staff, as well as student programming which negatively impacts academic achievement, inclusivity, and the overall educational experience of students and families in our community.

It is disheartening to consider the potential cuts to programs like band and chorus, which not only help students express themselves but also promote a sense of belonging. These programs are vital for students who may not excel in traditional academic settings and should not be postponed until 7th grade. The arts play a crucial role in the development of our children, providing enrichment opportunities that enhance their academic learning. They foster critical thinking, creativity, global awareness, and social-emotional skills, which are essential in today's world.

Our mission in New Hartford Public Schools emphasizes inspiring and preparing all children to become independent and enthusiastic learners. I question how we can accomplish this with minimal resources, especially when enrichment programs, mental health supports, and field experiences are being cut. When I told my son recently about these cuts, he expressed, "There is nothing fun in school anymore," which is a sentiment that should not be prevalent in elementary education.

The impact of these cuts extends beyond our immediate community, affecting our competitiveness with surrounding towns, and impacting college and career readiness of our children. We should be sustaining our budget to enhance educational experiences, not diminishing them. Our children deserve opportunities that inspire engagement and a love for learning, while developing the whole child. I want our children to grow up and be proud of the education they received in New Hartford Public Schools rather than feel like they missed out on the experiences they deserved. Please remember that once cuts to staffing and programming are made, we will not get them back, therefore, we need to keep these budget items intact for our students now and for those coming to us in the future.

Thank you for considering these concerns as we strive to create an exemplary educational environment for all students.

Best regards,

Emily Bernard



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Fwd: Letter for consideration of proposed budget cut

1 message

Jeffrey Sousa <sousaj@newhtfd.org>
To: "Janet G.M. Terenzi" <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 3:25 PM

Jeffrey F. Sousa
Superintendent New Hartford Public Schools

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Christine Holland** <hollandc@newhtfd.org>
Date: Thu, Mar 20, 2025 at 12:58 PM
Subject: Letter for consideration of proposed budget cut
To:

To: Board of Education

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to address the proposed elimination of the Clerical Aide position from our budget for the 2025-2026 school year. I would like to present a scenario that frequently occurs at Antolini School and emphasizes the critical need for additional support in the Main Office.

In the Health Office, I often care for multiple students at once, each with varying levels of medical and emotional needs. These can range from colds, vomiting, cuts and scrapes, injuries, and fevers, to the administration of medication and mental health support. On many occasions, these needs must be addressed simultaneously for several students. I often rely on help from the office staff, when possible, to assist with contacting parents for various reasons, managing communications, and addressing other needs that arise during the day.

While I do my best to manage, if I am required to step away from the Health Office due to inadequate staffing—such as answering phones, opening doors, making copies, assisting students with their stars, or managing deliveries for both the school and Oak Hill—this compromises the level of care I can provide to each student.

Ensuring the safety of our students and staff is our most important responsibility. It is simply not feasible to expect the Nurse to take on all these additional duties, especially if our Administrative Assistant is absent or otherwise unavailable, and the Principal is tied up with her own responsibilities. We work together as a team every day, but this staffing cut would undoubtedly compromise my ability to do my job effectively and provide the quality care our students deserve.

This is precisely why our school, with 238 students, requires two clerical positions. Operating effectively with only one would stretch our resources too thin, especially compared to schools that serve fewer students but have a similar ratio of staff.

I strongly urge you to reconsider the proposal to cut the Clerical Aide position. The safety, well-being, and proper care of our students depend on it.

Sincerely,

Christine Holland

Nurse at Antolini School



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

Please Do NOT CUT Music!!!

1 message

Anissa Zucker Kainos Joy Podcast <anissazucker@gmail.com>

Tue, Mar 25, 2025 at 5:03 PM

To: nortona@newhtfd.org, kleppst@newhtfd.org, sousaj@newhtfd.org, lynchm@newhtfd.org, terenzij@newhtfd.org, buzzit@newhtfd.org, albertm@newhtfd.org, millerp@newhtfd.org, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org, perottie@newhtfd.org, tindalld@newhtfd.org, russellt@newhtfd.org
Cc: David Zucker <DaveZ12345@gmail.com>

Anissa Zucker**10 Kellogg Rd****New Hartford, CT****anissazucker@gmail.com**

860-933-1399

3/25/25

To: [Board of Education Members]

New Hartford Board of Ed.

New Hartford, CT 06057

Subject: Urgent Appeal to Preserve the Music Program in Our Schools

Dear Board of Finance-

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed budget cuts that would eliminate most of the music department, cancel band and choir programs, and stretch a single music teacher across multiple schools. I strongly urge you to reconsider these decisions and prioritize keeping music education intact for the benefit of our students and the community.

Our daughter and some of her 4th grade friends were really looking forward to BAND and CHOIR. These are KEY components to a healthy variety of educational resources! Without the musical component how will parents know if their children are musical or not? Band is VITAL! Please don't throw it away. I have bulleted some KEY points to help you understand.

The Proven Value of Music Education-

Decades of research have confirmed the immense academic, social, and emotional benefits of music education. Music is not just an extracurricular activity—it is an essential part of a well-rounded education. Studies from organizations such as the National Association for Music Education and the American Psychological Association show that students involved in music programs consistently outperform their peers in math, reading comprehension, and problem-solving skills. Music fosters discipline, creativity, teamwork, and confidence—qualities that serve students well beyond the classroom.

The Harm in Cutting the Music Program-

- 1. Academic Setbacks: Cutting music programs deprives students of a proven tool for cognitive and emotional development, particularly for those who learn best through hands-on, creative, and auditory methods.**
- 2. Loss of Community and School Spirit: Band and choir performances bring the school and community together, fostering a sense of pride and unity. These programs are often central to school traditions and morale.**
- 3. Negative Impact on College and Career Readiness: Many colleges and universities value music participation in admissions. Music education also provides students with career pathways in performance, education, music therapy, and sound engineering.**
- 4. Mental Health and Emotional Well-being: At a time when student anxiety and depression are at an all-time high, removing music—a vital creative outlet—would be detrimental to their emotional health.**

Unreasonable Burden on One Teacher-

Spreading one music teacher across multiple schools is an unrealistic expectation that diminishes the quality of instruction. Music is a specialized subject that requires consistency, relationship-building, and adequate resources. A single teacher cannot effectively serve multiple schools while maintaining high-quality instruction. This decision would not only overwork the teacher but also deprive students of the meaningful experiences they deserve.

A Call for Creative Solutions-

Rather than eliminating or gutting the music program, I urge the Board to explore alternative solutions, such as:

- **Seeking grants or fundraising initiatives specifically for the arts.**
- **Partnering with local businesses, organizations, and music programs to secure sponsorships.**
- **Reallocating funds in ways that do not compromise core educational programs like music.**

I respectfully ask that the Board of Education uphold its commitment to providing a comprehensive, quality education for all students. Music is not an expendable luxury—it is a necessity. Please do not take away this vital part of our students' learning and development.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to discuss this further or provide additional resources on the benefits of music education.

Sincerely,

**Anissa Pesce Zucker, M.ed.
Literacy Coach and ADHD Specialist
860-933-1399**

--
**"Joy is a choice. 🥰 You may not have much control over your circumstances, but you can still choose to be joyful." ~Sarah Young
*| Jesus Calling***

My YouTube channel -
Kainos Joy Podcast--- > [Kainos Joy Podcast
https://www.youtube.com/@kainosjoypodcast](https://www.youtube.com/@kainosjoypodcast)
or JOIN our Kainos JOY Podcast/ Facebook group-
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/kainosjoy/>

**"It is only with the heart one sees rightly.
What is essential is invisible to the eye."**

adapted from: The Little Prince By: Antoine de Saint Exupery

John 13:15 For I have demonstrated an example for you to mirror. I give you a new commandment, keep on loving one another just as I have loved you - my love for you is the source of your love for one another. In this environment of your love for one another everyone will come to know your discipleship unto me.

Mirror Bible (<https://app.mirrorword.net>)

--

From: Helen M Tabaka <helenamtab@gmail.com>

Date: March 27, 2025 at 10:08:00 AM EDT

To: kleppst@newhtfd.org

Subject: Budget concerns

Dear Timothy Klepps and Board Members,

We'd like to express our concerns on funding programs for all students.

New Hartford's education programs have provided our two children a well-rounded education with academic excellence and opportunities to explore their interests and talents.

As retired special educators, we understand the cost of mandated special education programs. However, for a school system to maintain its standard of excellence, it needs to provide these important educational programs for regular education students, not take away from them.

Please find financial support of programs so our town continues to provide a high standard of education for all students.

Respectfully,
Helen and Gerry Tabaka



Janet G.M. Terenzi <terenzij@newhtfd.org>

2025/ 2026 Proposed Budget

1 message

Erin Phelan <efavre15@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 27, 2025 at 1:52 PM

To: albertm@newhtfd.org, buzzit@newhtfd.org, kleppst@newhtfd.org, millerp@newhtfd.org, perottie@newhtfd.org, rodenbergf@newhtfd.org, russellt@newhtfd.org, tindalld@newhtfd.org, youngk@newhtfd.org, sousaj@newhtfd.org, terenzij@newhtfd.org

Dear Superintendent & Board of Education,

I write this letter to you as a Taxpayer, a parent of 2 children in the school district & overall concerned citizen. I can't imagine the time & stress you have all endured throughout this Budget season but I need you to know that I am thoroughly disheartened with the 2025/26 proposed budget.

A 4.99% increase is upsetting & completely unsustainable year after year. My husband & I love our schools, we love our community, but we are becoming increasingly concerned that if we as a district don't take a step back & rein in this spending there are going to be a lot of families, myself included, that will soon be out taxed of our homes. We need to start being responsible and start making hard cuts & decisions, and we absolutely must take the emotions out of the equation. Over the last few weeks, I've heard a lot of emotional responses regarding the budget, but I haven't heard practical ones. Well, it's time we began those practical talks, to find practical solutions, we must start talking about school consolidation & increase in class sizes. Enrollment is down again, yet staffing levels remain the same. Now is the time to begin those conversations, our community cannot continue to fund budgets of this size when costs such as Special Education & Health Care continue to increase all the while we pay salary duplication for multiple positions.

As a parent, I put my children's educational needs above that of a taxpayer, yet as I look back, I must ask, what truly have our children gained in education & services with all these continued increases? Honestly, the answer is nothing in terms of education. At the end of the day the quality of education our children receive (which is truly amazing in my opinion) is the same as it was in years past, just a lot more. I do feel though, we as a district are spending entirely too much in way of Emotional Support staff/ services while taking away from valued programs such as Band & Chorus. Cutting the Arts is a disservice to our children & our district. We should be encouraging those programs not cutting. We should be pushing back on parents to parent/discipline their children, it's not the school's responsibility to parent these kids. We should not be offering Emotional/ Behavioral Support programs in place of educational programs, if anything these should be the after school programs.

We need to start doing better. We cannot continue on this current trajectory of throw more money at it, the school budget is already 80% of the Towns entire budget. We need to consider the financial impacts on the vast majority of our community who don't have children in our schools. It is time to start making the necessary decisions that are long-overdue. We cannot be asked to always pay more.

Sincerely,

Erin Phelan

25 Tanglewood Rd., New Hartford

From: J M <jennifer.mastrocola@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Mar 26, 2025 at 9:13 PM
Subject: BOE Proposed Budget 2025-2026
To: <sousaj@newhtfd.org>

Dear Superintendent Sousa and Members of the Board of Education,

We write to you both as concerned parents and as physicians. We recently moved to New Hartford at the end of 2023. One of the main reasons we chose this town was the quality of the school system.

We are extremely disheartened to learn of the proposed budget cuts that would greatly impact our children's and our town's educational experiences. If these had been in place when we were looking for homes, it would have negatively impacted our decision to move to the town.

Several concerning budget items came to our attention, including but not limited to the following:

We understand that the decrease in General Music FTE would lead to the band program becoming an afterschool program without instrumental lessons. Students who do not have instrumental lessons will not be prepared to participate in band, resulting in either a very unsuccessful band or a band made up of only students whose parents have the time and finances to allow their children to participate in private lessons outside of school. Also, by making this an afterschool program, children of many working parents may no longer be able to participate. Music education/band participation should not be influenced by socioeconomic status and should be an opportunity for all students to learn a skill that will help them throughout their lives. Numerous studies point to the benefits of participation in music education and in learning an instrument. Removing chorus from Ann Antolini excludes students whose voice is their instrument. Had chorus not been available to me (Jennifer), I would not have been able to participate in music education as my talents were vocal, not instrumental. I would also have not been prepared to participate in high school chorus or high school musicals, which offered me a much needed creative outlet and an opportunity to round out my high school studies and participate in regional and national competitions. Being a part of band and/or chorus, helps students to be more well rounded and more competitive as college applicants. As parents, we are concerned that our children will be behind in music education compared to our neighboring towns and therefore not be prepared to participate/succeed in Region 7 Middle and High School band and chorus or become frustrated/lose interest, therefore putting them at a disadvantage when applying to college.

As a family physician and pediatrician, we are extremely concerned about the elimination of the school counseling position. We are in agreement with the American Academy of Family Physician Policy Statement on School Safety and Student Mental Health which states "Mental health supports should be available for students who need them. Untreated mental health conditions are associated with poor academic performance, misconduct, school drop-out, unemployment, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and violence. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among this age group, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the period 2009-2016 the suicide rate increased 33%." It is unfortunately not a secret that we are experiencing a mental health crisis in our country, with our youngest children

deeply impacted. We need dedicated mental health professionals on site for safety. If a child is in crisis, they are in need, but it also impacts the mental health and experience of the entire school. Given the district needs and multiple schools served, there are times when Ms. Vu has been the sole mental health professional on site to handle crises when they occur. If her position is eliminated, our students may be without assistance in their time of greatest need. Another unintended consequence of eliminating her position, would be the resulting increase in the caseloads of the other mental health professionals in town. Additionally as Ms. Vu's position offloads some of Mr. Ploud's caseload, he has been able to provide additional enrichment services for students to help them to be challenged and successful in their education. This would no longer be possible if her position is eliminated.

We are also deeply concerned with the elimination of the Talented & Gifted and Math Olympian programs. Special education encompasses the needs of students on all ends of the educational spectrum. While integrated classrooms undoubtedly benefit all students, there will always be students requiring additional assistance and students requiring enrichment. It cannot be another responsibility added to the already overloaded classroom teacher to provide this enrichment. These programs help students to achieve their full potential. Challenging students helps them be more engaged in their regular classroom learning and when they share the knowledge/skills they have acquired through these programs with their peers, it benefits all of the students in the classroom.

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer B. Mastrocola, MD
Adam S. Mastrocola, MD
52 Honey Hill Road
New Hartford, CT 06057

From: **Kate Jon** <katesfamily2000@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Mar 26, 2025 at 9:32 AM

Subject: Respectfully requesting Superintendent Sousa + BOE + BOF work together on a revised budget ahead of the April 1 Town Meeting

To: <albertm@newhtfd.org>, <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, <millerp@newhtfd.org>, <perottie@newhtfd.org>, <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, <russellt@newhtfd.org>, <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, <youngk@newhtfd.org>, Daniel Jerram <DJerram@newhartfordct.gov>, Christine Hayward <CHayward@newhartfordct.gov>, sousaj@newhtfd.org <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, <town@newhartfordct.gov>

Note: The Board of Education, Superintendent Sousa and Selectman Jerram are included on this message; hopefully town@newhartfordct.gov or one of you can bring in the Board of Finance

Note: for those who were unaware, with public comment (understandably) not being allowed yesterday evening at the BOF meeting, speaking was not possible thus we are emailing.

Dear Board of Finance, Board of Education, Superintendent Sousa and Selectman Jerram,

We write with a simple message -- can you please work together to enable/request Superintendent Sousa and, in turn, the BOE to submit a revised budget proposal to the BOF that can be utilized this coming Tuesday, April 1, at the Town Meeting?

As background, having attended both the BOE meeting last week and the BOF meeting yesterday evening, we heard the BOE say they need to hear the BOF wants a revised budget before submitting a revision, and heard the BOF say they need more information and a revised budget to consider before adding more funding, but there was no formal action taken that will lead to a revised budget ahead of April 1.

Given the vote during yesterday's BOF meeting, it is now clear that the budget that will go to the Town will include the 4.99% increase -- and continue to have the cuts that led to the public outcry -- unless action is taken to put forward the more informed, revised budget version that does not include the aforementioned cuts.

Therefore, and per what you have said you want to see happen, we truly hope you all can work together starting today to revise the local education budget for the meeting on April 1.

Respectfully,

Jon Puz & Kate Humphrey

Kate & Richard Tripp
587 Main Street
New Hartford, CT 06057

March 31, 2025

New Hartford Board of Education
P.O. Box 315
New Hartford, CT 06057

Dear Superintendent Sousa and Members of the Board of Education:

We are writing to you to express our deep concerns with the proposed cuts to the critical education programs at the New Hartford schools contained in the 2025-2026 budget. We have a daughter in first grade at New Hartford Elementary School and will be sending our son to kindergarten there in the fall. We have been extremely impressed with all teachers and staff at NHES. Both of our children are currently taking advantage of the speech therapy services that the district offers. We strongly value that program as well as the excellent professionals that educate our children daily. The proposed cuts to the band and chorus programs are particularly concerning. We believe that receiving a music education is vital for all children. Maintaining strong programs like band and chorus will help to continue to attract young families to our beautiful town.

We respectfully request that you submit the full budget, a +7.6% increase, without any cuts to the Board of Finance. There appears to be support for these programs even if that means an increase in taxes.

Sincerely,

Kate & Rick Tripp

From: David Zucker <davez12345@gmail.com>

Date: April 1, 2025 at 2:01:01 PM EDT

To: kleppst@newhdfd.org

Subject: concern over cutting of band

Dear Mr. Klepps,

I am upset with the proposition that band and other music services will be cut from Ann Antolini. Music is extremely good for math skills, creative thought, spatial reasoning, and many other areas of education and fourth to sixth grade is a very important time for music education. In many school systems, band would begin in intermediate school and Antolinni acts as the intermediate school in New Hartford. I work as a music teacher and I am finishing a music therapy degree. I have been in music my entire life and that started in my intermediate school. My daughter will be going into 5th next year and she is so excited to start band. Please consider another way to make budget cuts without cutting band.

sincerely, David Zucker

My daughter is Melody Zucker and she is a 4th grader.

--

David Zucker

860-869-5883

DaveZ12345@gmail.com

From: **Mia Doyle** <mialovesbodo@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Apr 1, 2025 at 9:34 PM

Subject: Band and Choir Cuts

To: <albertm@newhtfd.org>, <buzzit@newhtfd.org>, <kleppst@newhtfd.org>, <millerp@newhtfd.org>, <perottie@newhtfd.org>, <rodenbergf@newhtfd.org>, <russellt@newhtfd.org>, <tindalld@newhtfd.org>, <youngk@newhtfd.org>, <sousaj@newhtfd.org>, <town@newhartfordct.gov>

Good evening, my name is Mia Doyle, I live on 625 West Hill Road, I am a sophomore at Northwestern Regional 7 in the Wind Symphony band, previously a student of both Bakersville elementary and Ann Antolini. I wanted to start off by thanking everyone on the boards for doing all that you do for the town. I am speaking in regards to the proposed budget cuts for the elementary schools, particularly the band and choir changes.

I was, and still am a part of the band, starting before elementary school, going through the elementary school bands, quitting my instrument due to Covid changes and then rejoining, playing a completely different instrument in late middle school. As someone who experienced the elementary school bands, it was a very cool experience where I got to make friends while learning something that no one was all that great at to start. We were learning from the start, with no real knowledge on the instruments, my classmates and i would not be where we are today without the private lessons with each instrumental section from Mrs. Melilo. She was able to teach us so much and realistically, we wouldn't have learned how to actually play our instruments otherwise. Coming from someone who has learned how to play 2 instruments, it is not an easy thing to do, especially for a 10 year old, with no personal instruction, it is practically impossible. While it is such a difficult thing to do, it is great in so many ways. I learned and am still learning so much from band, not just the instrument but socially and intellectually.

Learning a musical instrument and learning to sing at a young age offers numerous benefits, including improved cognitive skills, enhanced memory, increased self-esteem, and boosted creativity, while also fostering patience, discipline, and social skills which this generation has already seen to be severely lacking.

This proposed cut of the choir and moving band to be only after school will not only make the kids in the school who do not get to play an instrument or learn to sing, disappointed, but it will also be putting the kids from New Hartford behind everyone else when joining Northwestern middle school. They will just be picking an instrument or just learning to control their voice while the other kids from Norfolk, Colebrook and Barkahmstead already have some experience. This will then go on to affect the High School band and choir where people from New Hartford will not have the same level of experience and will not do as well if they start late.

I remember being in band was so cool in Elementary and I want every kid after me to be able to have the same, if not a better experience than I did. This will have a huge impact on everyone but once it is done, it will not be put back into place. I ask you to please, seriously reconsider these budget cuts in hopes of keeping the things that matter the most to these kids and their futures.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **The Champeau Family** <champeau.family@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, Apr 1, 2025 at 8:27 PM

Subject: Public comments

To: <sousaj@newhtfd.org>

Thank you for your time these are my comments from tonight's meeting

Crystal Champeau
28 Tanglewood rd

Good evening

My name is Crystal Champeau 28 Tanglewood rd

I don't think we can afford to let our children's futures be diminished by budget cuts that target essential resources and extracurricular programs—especially mental health resources the Talented and Gifted program, and band

Education is not just about reading, writing, and math. It is about developing well-rounded individuals who can think critically, innovate, and express themselves in meaningful ways. The programs being considered for elimination are not luxuries; they are essential.

These programs drive student success. Studies consistently show that students involved in music and gifted programs perform better academically, score higher on standardized tests, and have stronger problem-solving skills. Cutting them would not only hurt those directly enrolled but would also lower overall school performance.

Extracurricular activities keep students engaged and connected. They foster a sense of belonging, reduce dropout rates, and teach discipline, teamwork, and leadership. Removing these programs will disproportionately affect students who thrive outside of traditional academics, leaving many feeling overlooked and unmotivated.

The long-term cost of these cuts far outweighs the short-term savings. Eliminating these programs means fewer students will have opportunities to develop the skills that make them competitive for scholarships, college admissions, and careers. Many parents will seek alternative educational options, potentially leading to lower enrollment and funding losses down the road.

I urge you to reconsider this budget proposal. Instead of cutting these invaluable programs, let's explore alternative funding sources or reallocating non-essential expenditures. Our children deserve a budget that reflects their full potential, not one that limits it.

Thank you.

April 3, 2025

Letters to the Editor
Republican-American
389 Meadow St
Waterbury, CT 06722

Dear Editor,

I attended the Finance Board Meeting on April 1, 2025 at 7:00pm at the Town Hall Senior Center. The town was invited to attend to ask questions and provide input on the best use of our tax dollars. This meeting was to guide the Board of Finance in developing a budget to go to Referendum.

I left there dumbfounded. The Superintendent of the New Hartford Public Schools, Jeffrey Sousa, opened his presentation with the Mission Statement..... The mission of the New Hartford Public Schools in partnership with families and the community is to inspire and prepare all children to become independent and enthusiastic learners who achieve excellence by providing a challenging and exemplary education program that is differentiated, inclusive, and dynamic...with a big emphasis that all their decisions were based on THE GOOD OF THE CHILDREN. The New Hartford BOE budget included the elimination of the 5th & 6th Grade Band, School Counselor and the White Memorial program. I do not understand how that is for the GOOD OF THE CHILDREN.

There was no discussion of the number of paraprofessionals that are available in the schools or the number of empty classrooms. All my children went through the New Hartford schools and I was and am still grateful for all their hard work. My oldest daughter is now a 1st grade teacher because of her experience at Bakerville. She has been teaching now for three years in a nearby district with 19 students in her classroom with no paraprofessional. She comes in early or stays late to make copies. Nobody wants to see anyone lose their job but it seems as though the children are not being put first in this budget. I am hoping that the BOE would take a closer look at their budget and really consider the GOOD OF THE CHILDREN.

Thank you,



Roxanne Helt

New Hartford, CT

Board of Education

530 Main St

New Hartford, CT 06057

Over the years I have attended roughly 40 Budget hearings. These meetings invariably have the same characteristics. The budgets are high, cuts need to be made, parents get upset, and when you look at the list of cuts you can understand why.

The Board of Education is responsible for the growth of our children, mentally and academically. When cuts need to be made, they should be made with the least harm to children as well as looking at what can be cut for the time being and not forever with no chance of ever coming back. Spanish was cut last year. A program that had existed in some form for at least 50 years. (I had of version of this program when I attended Bakerville School) This program will never come back. If band/chorus is cut it will never come back.

Programs like Math Olympiads, White Memorial, and talented and gifted focus on specific strengths of students as well as exposure to new things. Just try answering some of the math questions students need to answer in order to qualify for the Math Olympiads. Has anyone asked how many students actually participate in this program? As board members I think you should try to see if you could qualify for the program. White Memorial provides students with integration of skills learned in school; but in an outdoor environment. For some students it provides tremendous growth as they navigate their world without their parents.

Counseling is important for some students. Years ago parents never would have admitted publicly that their children needed help to function in their academic setting. I applaud these parents for advocating for their children. However, I do have to wonder about outside programs that exist and provide services to students. More needs to be done in seeking outside services to come into the schools. The counselor and social worker are relatively new positions. Has it been determined how successful they have been?

One thing that has irked me year after year is that budget cuts somehow affect the students most dramatically, followed by staff that works directly with them and their classroom teacher, and eventually teachers who are the direct link to students. Where and how are the administrative offices affected. For some reason these positions/offices are untouchable. I'm sure it leaves a bad taste in your mouth to cut these positions. After all these positions are necessary and if you cut them how would you ever get them back. (Sound familiar)? How could they be cut. As suggested at the hearing let's get creative. Each administrator could work 4.5 days a week rather than five. Days could be rotated so that only 1 administrator was out at a time. Of course this couldn't be done easily, but making cuts shouldn't be easy. That is only one idea. However, making administrative cuts in some form would give the budget cuts a more balanced look. Everyone feels the pain.

In closing, I ask you to keep one thing in mind. Over and over it was mentioned that one reason people move to New Hartford for the school system. If you continue to make cuts in things that can't/won't ever return what sets New Hartford Public Schools apart from other towns??

Sincerely,

Laura Polakow

195 Cedar Ln

New Hartford, CT 06057

Dear Board Members,

My name is Leah Lampognana, I live at 210 Maple Hollow Road.

I grew up in this town and have lived here all my life. I started my education at the Bakerville Consolidated Preschool and had the pleasure to go through the entire school program through high school. It was an amazing experience for me, and I can hope that my children are lucky enough to have the same experience.

I have now stayed home with my children for the last two years, but prior to that, I taught first grade for five years in a nearby district. To echo some others, the mental health crisis for students is here and evident. I have had my fair share of students who struggle with mental health at many different levels. I wanted to speak on how worried I am that the school counselor is on the chopping block.

50 students. This is how many students Superintendent Sousa reported that the school counselor in question has on their caseload. 39 students at Antolini, 11 elsewhere. Because of my experience as an elementary school teacher, I am going to go out on a limb and assume that most, not all, but most of those 50 students are receiving counseling services due to a 504 or IEP. Meaning, these are services that are required by law. I am sure that your school psychologist is phenomenal, but phenomenal or not, is it really reasonable to ask them to take on an additional 50 caseloads? In addition to their own caseload, as well as the "triaging", as Superintendent Sousa called it, needed when a student is in crisis, on top of the endless time spent in PPTs and 504s, or meetings to prepare for 504s or PPTs, and finally in addition to the time spent testing students undergoing a Special Ed referral. It's just not humanly possible, nor is it fair. We are not just talking about the impact of mental health on our students, we're also talking about the mental impact on your staff. When the school psychologist simply cannot keep up with the outrageous caseload expected of them, or it happens to be a day when a mental health worker is not in the school building, but a student is in crisis at any magnitude, who does it fall on? Your teachers. Teachers' plates are overflowing at any given time of the year, and now we will be adding another significant expectation on. And yet, they will do it. No, I do not have a student in the school system yet, and I may not know all of your teachers personally, but I do already know that they are giving their all, every single day. I know that because I too am a teacher, and that is what we do. But when things like this happen, and incredibly valuable resources are cut, this tends to lead to frustration, lack of support, and burn out. Yet we step back and wonder why so many amazing teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. It begins with decisions like this.

To add to this, there are now the arts and extracurricular activities on the chopping block as well. In my experience as a teacher, I have seen countless students who struggle with mental health end up excelling in these programs, such as band, Math Olympiads, TAG, and more. These programs are sometimes the only time in the day when these struggling students truly feel successful or feel like they belong. Outside of typical classroom structure, some of these struggling students may shine in extracurriculars. So not only are we talking about taking away a safe and trusted mental health specialist, but now we are also taking away sacred extracurricular programs on top of it. Where will these students turn to? How can we expect our students to excel when we are not giving them all the support we know they not only need, but also deserve?

You say we care about our children, and I believe you, but now it is time to show them. So please, I urge you to reconsider the decision to cut the school counselor position for the 2025-2026 school year. Sure, it may save you \$71,500 in your school budget, but I can guarantee that it will end up costing you a whole lot more than that.

Respectfully,

Leah Lampognana