SPS
Stratford Public Schools

August 30, 2022

Dear Principal Melissa Warner,
Dear Principal Christopher Robertson,

This letter is a response from the Stratford Board of Education to your recent objection to the reduction of 1.0 FTE Nurse in the *Stratford Board of Education FY 22-23 Adopted Budget*.

After a thorough review and consideration of the communication from Saint Marks and Saint James schools, as well as hearing testimonies and comments shared during *Public Forum* on the subject matter at the August 22 Board of Education meeting, the Stratford Board of Education stands by its decision, consistent to its adoption of its FY 2022–23 Operating Budget.

The ethos of the Board, as a collective governance body, is always centered on the children of Stratford.

Budget reductions, annually, are a hot topic in communities across the state of Connecticut, and across the country. This past spring, the Stratford Board of Education made difficult decisions to reduce our proposed budget by approximately $2.5 million against a 4.57% request, and the subsequent 2.5% town appropriation. The reductions proposed by district administration, and approved by the BOE, touched on almost every department or division of the SPS academic institution. As you can conclude, the budget reduction process annually raises *pain-points* for people who are impacted by said reduction measures. This past year a large segment of our community came out to join the conversation, observe BOE workshops and attend Town Council workshops, advocating for full funding of the Stratford Board of Education's budget.

As we consider the reduction of this specific subject, analyzed against **Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 10-217a**:

> *"Each town or regional school district which provides health services for children attending its public schools in any grade, from kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, shall provide the same health services for children in such grades attending private nonprofit schools therein, when a majority of the children attending such schools are residents of the state of Connecticut. Any such town or district may also provide such services for children in prekindergarten programs in such private nonprofit schools when a majority of the children attending such schools are residents of the state of Connecticut. Such determination shall be based on the percentage of resident pupils enrolled in such school on October first, or the full school day immediately preceding such date, during the school year next prior to that in which the health services are to be provided."*

We conclude, through analysis, with approximately 6,900 children across our 13 schools, and a total of 13 full-time nurses, the nursing caseloads across our public schools is approximately 1:520+ (in some of our buildings, 1:1000+). Comparatively, as reported by one stakeholder who spoke at the August 22 Board of Education meeting, both Saint Marks and Saint James have a combined 437 students for a ratio of 1:437. With two full-time nurses, that ratio is further reduced to an approximately 1:219. Applied against Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 10-217a, we can naturally conclude that nurses working at Saint James and/or Saint Marks have a *significantly better* student ratio compared to their colleagues at the Stratford Public Schools. The Board concludes that the services provided are

indeed "not the same," but rather inherently favorable to both Saint Marks and Saint James—given the contextual ratios in the Stratford Public Schools.

With a commitment to continuing to do so, the Stratford Public Schools has a long history of supporting our private school colleagues. Some of the ways we do so include providing:

- Child find services
- Processing referrals for children with suspected learning and behavioral exceptionalities
- Holding IEP meetings
- Diagnostic Testing
- Providing service plans for all Saint Marks and Saint James students identified as needing services
- IDEA funding

That said, we recognize the variance in student medical need across each building. The Stratford Board of Education is not insensitive to that fact. We stand committed to continue to support the work of Saint Marks and Saint James.

In the coming days, Stratford Public Schools Director of Pupil Services (Heather Borges) and Head Nurse (Kim Velazquez) will send communication to both schools requesting a meeting to co-construct a transition plan to ensure protocols and best practices are in place to support each school community. We are hopeful this collaboration between SPS, Saint Marks, and Saint James will help your transition as you look to reestablish processes and practices that allow for effective service delivery to your students and staff with medical needs.

Lastly, although this decision by the Stratford Board of Education is final, the Board is committed to revisiting this subject matter at the start of the new calendar year as we publicly begin our work on next year's budget. If conditions and resources position us to reinstate this FTE position in future budgets, we will give it a strong consideration. Accordingly, we invite you to join us for our *budget workshops* to ensure your voice is a part of the discourse. We additionally encourage you to participate in the *Town Council Budget Workshops*.

We look forward to our continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Andrea Corcoran

Mrs. Andrea Corcoran
Board of Education, Chair

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