



Hartford Board of Education FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget

Presented on April 23, 2025

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent
Caitlin Richard, Chief Financial Officer
Jennifer Hockenull, Chair of Hartford Board of Education



Agenda



- **FY2026 Budget Timeline and Context**
- **FY2026 Proposed Budget**
 - Revenue
 - Expenses
 - Mitigation
- **Request to City from Board of Education**



FY 2025-2026 Context



FY26 Budget Timeline



	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Board	Budget overview to Finance Committee	Budget overview to BOE Board Budget Retreat		Draft budget shared with Finance Committee	Final budget shared with Board Finance Committee 4/15 BOE Budget Vote
Community		Training for SGCs	Public Forum #1 Legislative Advocacy	Public Forum #2	Final Public Forum
School teams		Training for school teams	Schools submit draft budgets	Feedback to schools to finalize budgets	



We reviewed historical data in order to inform our short- and long-term fiscal strategies:

HPS has a persistent structural deficit, driven by:

- Flat revenue
- Rising costs, driven by the choice and special education system (tuition, transportation), salary increases, and inflation

We have been pursuing a two-pronged approach to addressing our deficit:

1. **Deficit Mitigation**: Prioritize resources that are most aligned to the strategic plan
 - Short-term: Finding opportunities to reduce spending that have minimal impacts on students and teachers
 - Mid/long-term: Invest in school designs and programs that are better for students and teachers and promote long-term sustainability
2. **Legislative Advocacy**: State and City action to increase revenue and address cost drivers outside of our control



Two external reviews did not find any evidence of financial mismanagement:

- **Public Works** conducted an exhaustive 6 month review of HPS finances and concluded that there was **no evidence of misspending or underspending available funds.** The only savings identified by Public Works that could assist in closing a \$30 million deficit was eliminating 3 roles for an estimated savings of \$400k per year
 - Public Works' recommendations focused on reorganizing leadership roles, strengthening grant planning and execution, improving financial management practices, and updating standard operating procedures. All of these improvements are underway
- The **Blue Ribbon Commission** found **structural issues that create financial challenges** for HPS, including rising special education, tuition, and transportation costs in the ecosystem of school choice

Based on these reviews, we have focused on legislative advocacy to target the structural issues while doing the internal work to make difficult reductions to our budget



We projected a \$30M deficit based on a level-service budget



Revenue is projected to increase by 2.1%

- Final year of phasing in ECS funding



Expenses are projected to increase by 4.9%

- Increased expenses for salaries based on raises for teachers and other staff in contract negotiations
- Significant increases in tuition, special education, and transportation expenses
- Inflation in the cost of goods and services

New Teachers' Contract



The new contract will cost an additional \$6.1 million in FY26 and an additional \$19.6 million over three years.

BOE signed a new contract with the Hartford Federation of Teachers, effective 7/1/25

Contract changes that will improve recruitment include:

- Significant salary increases to be more competitive with surrounding districts, particularly at the entry level
- 7-hour work day (down from 7.5) to be better aligned to surrounding districts' working conditions
- 3 additional professional learning days to invest in teachers
- More flexible use of sick leave to support teacher morale
- Option to pay signing bonuses of up to \$10,000 in high need areas

<i>Salary in 24-25</i>	<i>Salary in 25-26 (new contract)</i>	<i>Improvement</i>
Newly hired teacher with a BA		
\$47,464	\$54,552	+7,088
Newly hired teacher with an MA		
\$51,761	\$60,740	+8,979
Veteran teacher with an MA, at the top step		
\$92,331	\$95,101	+2,770

New Contract is Essential to Address Vacancies in Classrooms



Teaching Areas	Vacancies start of SY23-24	Vacancies start of 2024-2025	Vacancies as of December 2024	Total Budgeted FTE's (FY 25)	Percent of Budgeted Vacant
Bilingual	3	7.5	7	29	24%
Library Media	0	0	0	5.5	0%
Speech, Language, Hearing	6.4	12.9	12.6	47.1	27%
Math	18	12	12	82	15%
School Psych	2	4.5	4.5	21.5	21%
Science	14.2	15.5	13.5	72.5	19%
SpEd	39.49	54.3	55.8	208	27%
TechEd	2	5.5	4	31.9	13%
TESOL	5	7.8	6.3	71	9%
World Languages	2	9.4	4.5	33.5	13%
Elementary	3	10	17	331.5	5%
All Other Teaching	27.36	38.5	35	454.3	8%
Certified Student Support	2.7	16.2	15.7	146.5	11%

In 2018, HPS embarked on the process of consolidating 12 facilities (20% reduction)

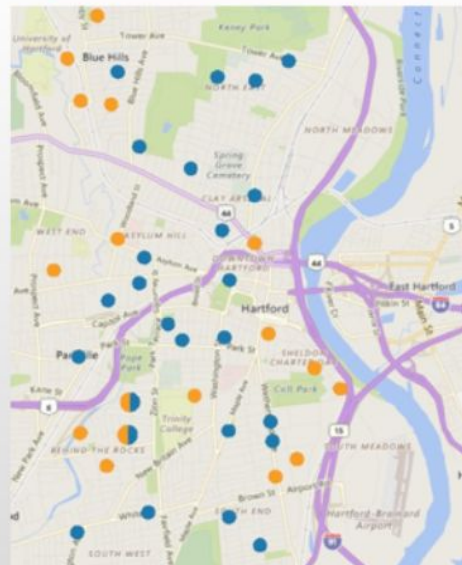


School consolidation saved \$15M over the course of 3 years—it did not solve the structural deficit

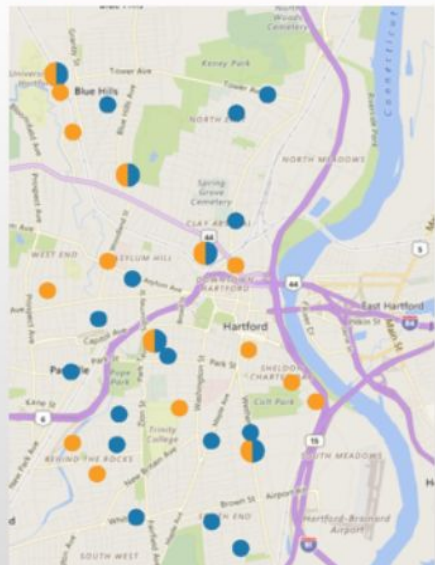
Implementing the District Model for Excellence would release \$4M from the operation of 12 facilities...

...and \$11M from staffing that would be reallocated towards higher impact assignments

Before Consolidation



Model for Excellence



If we increase the number of students in schools and grades...

...then schools could be staffed more strategically to support our priorities



Class sizes and other instructional staffing ratios closer to targets (\$10M)



Instructional Coach and Vice Principal staffing ratios closer to targets (\$1M)

\$11M consists of \$10M from teacher staffing ratios and \$1M from instructional coaches and vice principals
Source: HPS enrollment and facilities data, Oct 1, 2017 snapshot; 2016-17 HPS General Ledger data; ERS analysis.

School consolidation increased learning opportunities, and was a difficult and disruptive experience.



At the time, we named that this was only the beginning—additional right-sizing would need to happen in the future.

Combined, the \$15M would support high priority investments in students

EXAMPLES OF INVESTMENTS



Additional non-classroom time for teachers to plan and collaborate



Greater breadth of health, wellness, and enrichment offerings in MS and HS



Extended school day and year learning opportunities



Targeted small group sizes and intervention time for struggling students



Increased resources and opportunities to earn college credit and participate in career development



Advisory time for all students to support social-emotional learning

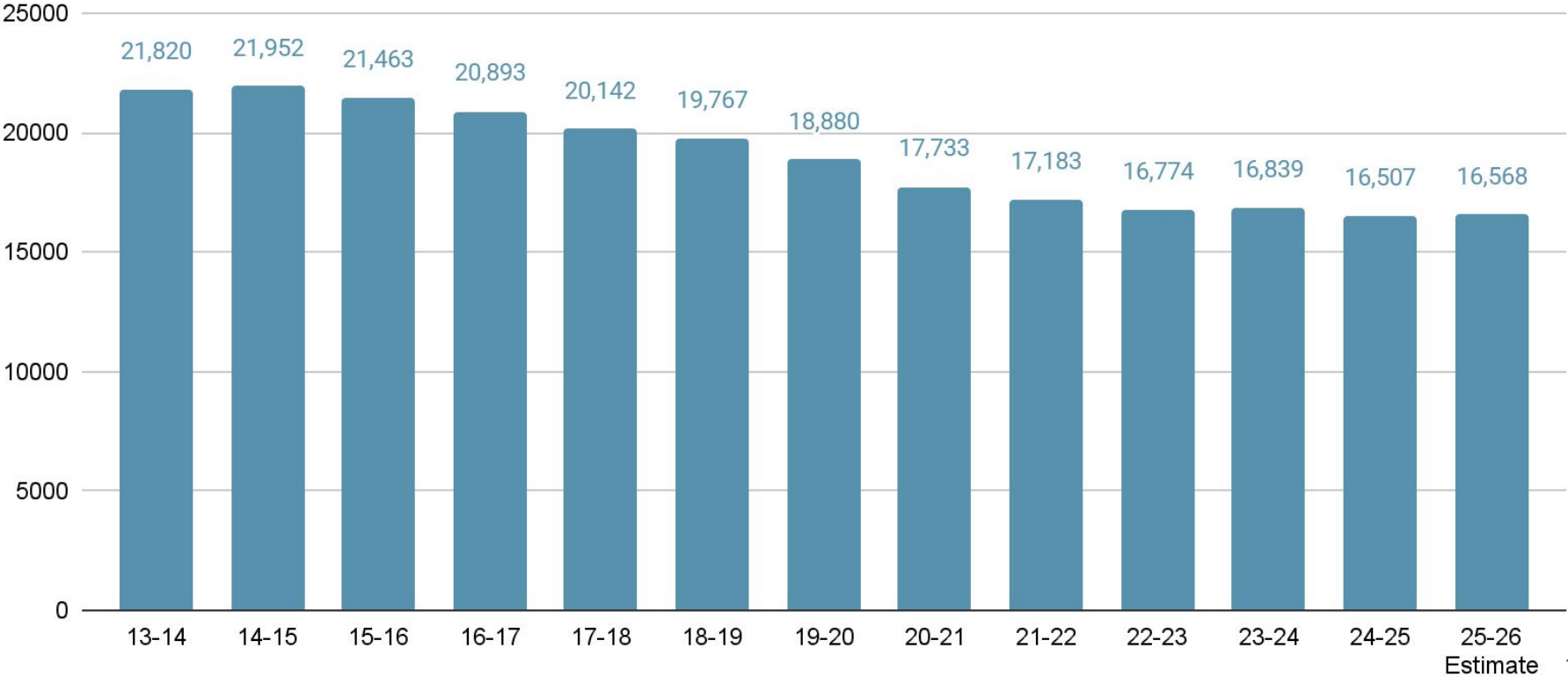
The biggest reconfiguration changes would take place over the next three years

June 2018	June 2019	June 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakthrough North reconfigures • Rawson reconfigures • MLK reconfigures and relocates • High School, Inc. relocates • Montessori relocates • Batchelder closes • Simpson-Waverly closes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burns reconfigures • Wish reconfigures • SAND reconfigures • Milner reconfigures and relocates • High School, Inc., JMA, and Kinsella 9-12 relocates • CCCMA closes • Culinary closes • Weaver Campus Opens • Milner Middle School Building Opens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian Studies reconfigures • Burr reconfigures (Middle School) • Global reconfigures • Naylor reconfigures • West Middle reconfigures • Betances STEM relocates • Breakthrough North relocates • Central Office relocates • MLK MS relocates • Pre-K Magnet relocates • Renzulli relocates • MD Fox offers Dual Language • Pre-K Magnet at Burns Opens • MLK Campus Opens

Enrollment Trend



HPS has experienced a 18% decrease in enrollment since 2017-18



Summary of Proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget



Executive Summary



- HPS has a **structural deficit** driven by more than 10 years of flat revenue and rising costs
- We projected a **\$30M deficit for FY2026**, driven by rising costs for special education, tuition, transportation, and salaries related to collective bargaining agreements

We have engaged in deficit mitigation and legislative advocacy work to reduce the deficit as follows:

We made initial reductions in our budget, including further central office realignment and reductions	\$15.3M
We will be receiving additional funding from the City	\$3M
Placeholder for additional State funding based on the State's FY2025 one-time contribution	\$5M
High-risk reductions made to balance the budget	\$6.7M
Total Mitigated thus far	\$30M
Total left to Mitigate	\$0M

We have identified \$22M in reductions

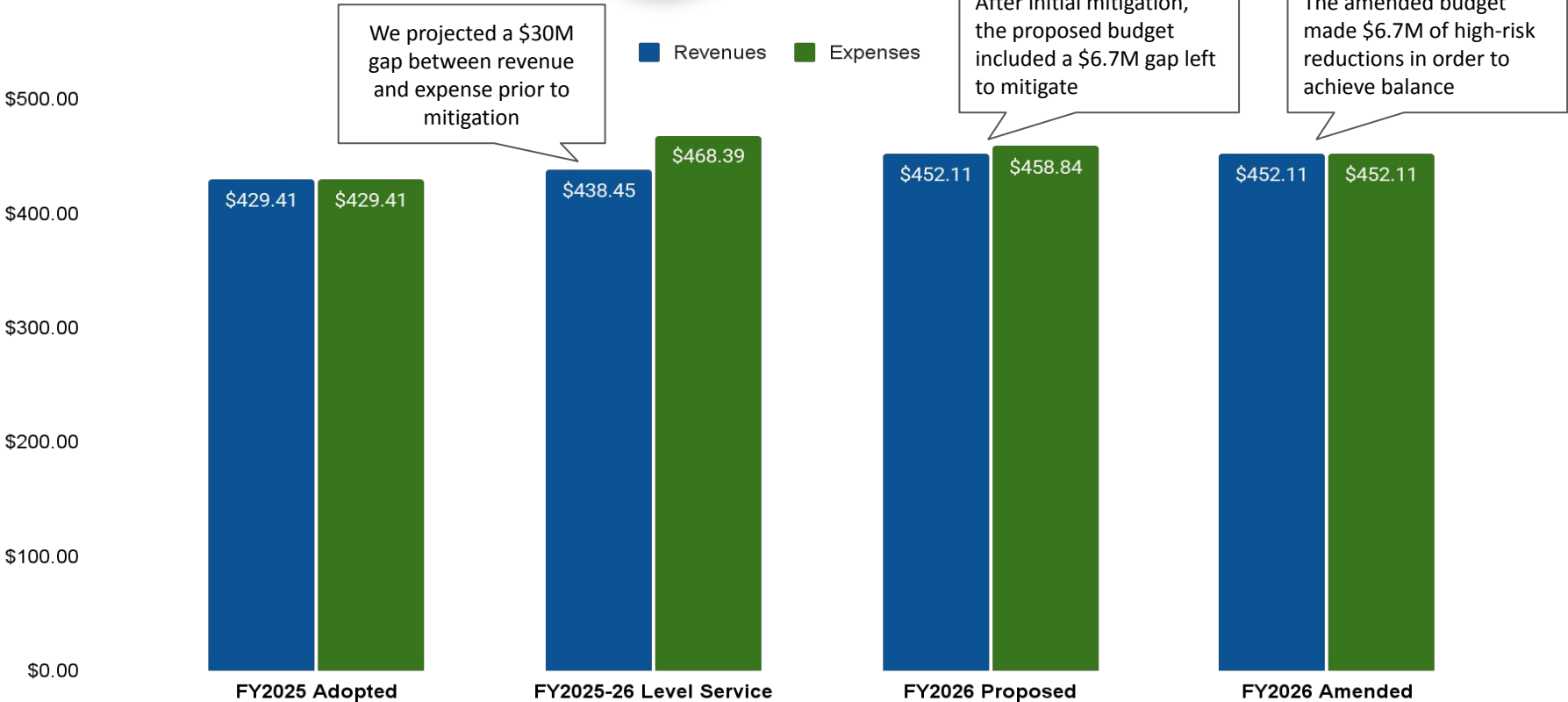


Category	Proposal	Initial reductions	High-risk reductions
School-based	Updated general education staffing ratios in the Equity Based Starter Budget (<i>about 1 reduced teaching position per school, does not include the positions restored with one-time funding this year</i>)	\$3.4M	
	Decrease the allocation for non-certified positions for school sites and instead allocate Title I funding to schools. Schools can use this funding for non-certified positions such as SESs, FCSSPs, and BTs or other certified staff.	\$1.1M	
	Reduce security guard allocation (eliminate floater positions)	\$0.5M	
	Eliminate the Magnet supplement (\$250 per pupil in FY2025)	\$2M	
	Decrease tier 2 and 3 supports for high school students: reducing Student Support and Success Centers, Hope Academy, and eliminating Opportunity Academy	\$0M	\$2M
	Eliminate ReadyCT and CTRise career pathways and 9th grade academies	\$0M	\$0.5M
	Decrease full service community schools lead agency funding not covered by grants	\$0M	\$1.0M
	Eliminate Assistant Principal positions for schools with less than 250 students	\$0M	\$0.9M
District-based	Central office position reductions (40 positions, primarily managerial)	\$4.3M	\$0.5M
	Reductions in non-personnel expenditures	\$2.0M	\$0.8M
	Eliminate the dental clinic	\$0M	\$1.0M
Reduction targets	Reduction targets for special education door-to-door transportation	\$2M	
Total	\$22M	\$15.3M	\$6.7M

Revenue Compared to Expenses



We have committed to reductions in expenses and have included increased revenue from the City, State, and previously unbudgeted grant funds



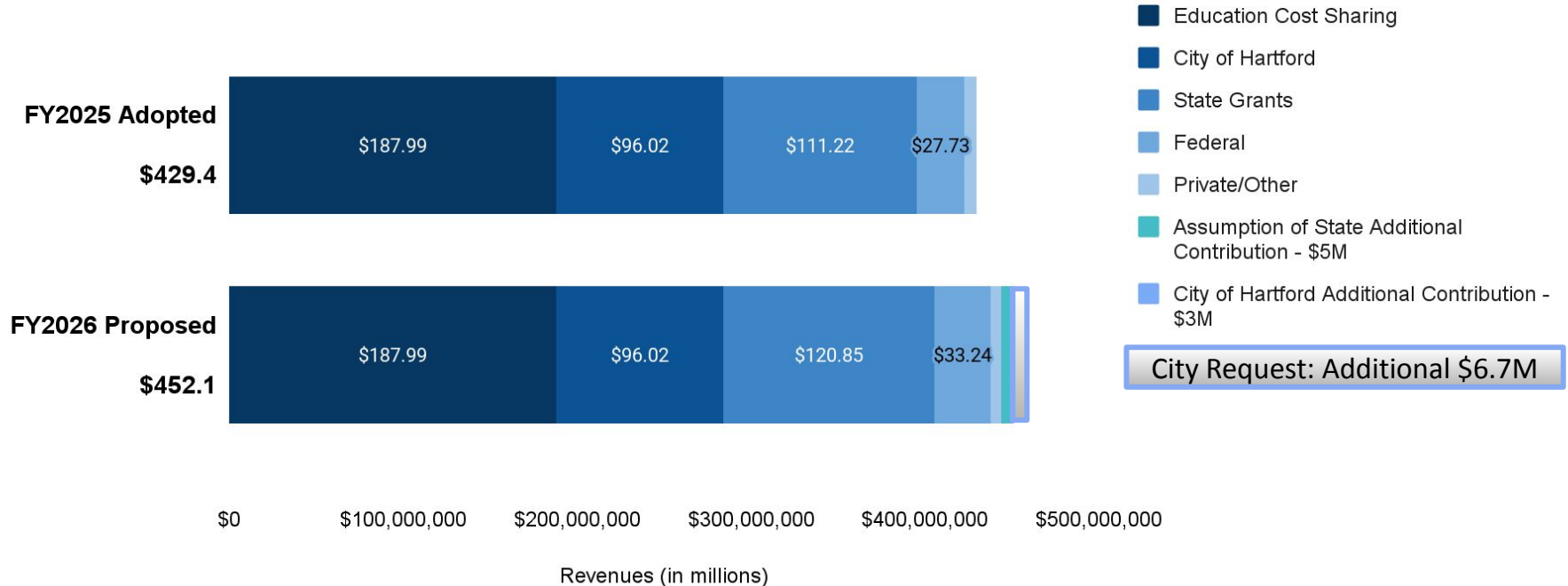
Projected Revenue



Assumptions:

- Final Year of Phasing in ECS
- City one-time funding of \$3M
- State one-time funding of \$5M
- Includes all State and Federal FY26 Grants

Comparison of Revenues in FY25 Adopted and FY26 Proposed Budgets

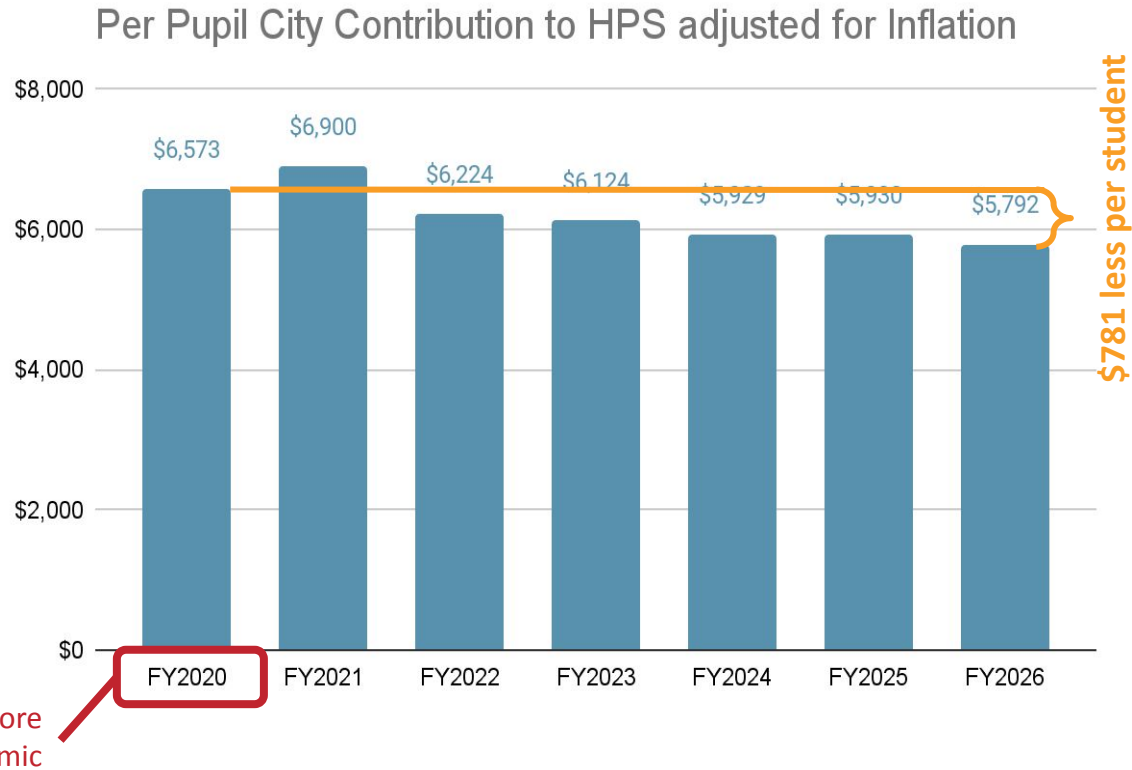


Impact of Inflation on City Per Pupil Contribution to HPS



After adjusting for the impact of inflation, Hartford Public Schools will be able to buy **\$781 less per student** in staff salaries, services, or supplies in FY2026 than was true in FY2020, the last adopted budget before the COVID-19 pandemic.

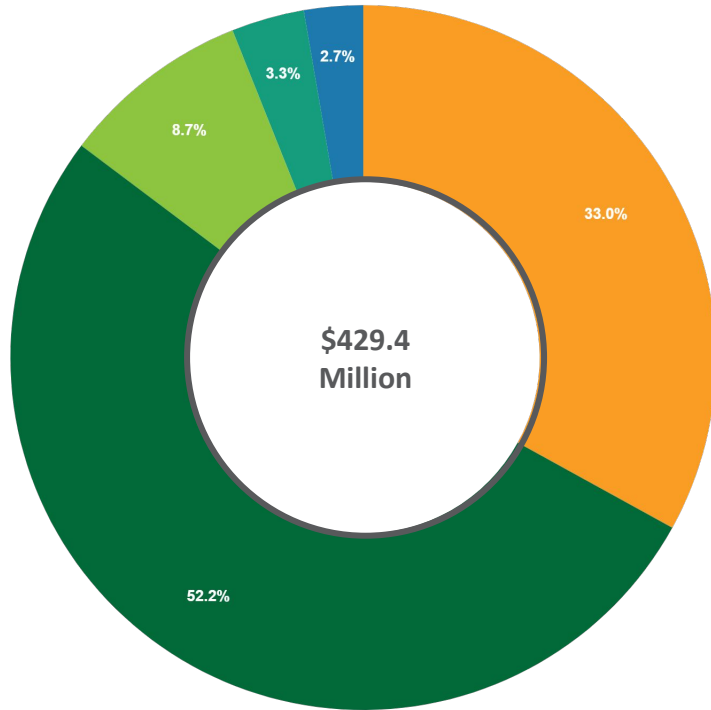
Across the entire district, this means about **\$13 million less** for staff salaries, supplies, or services.



Expenses by Function

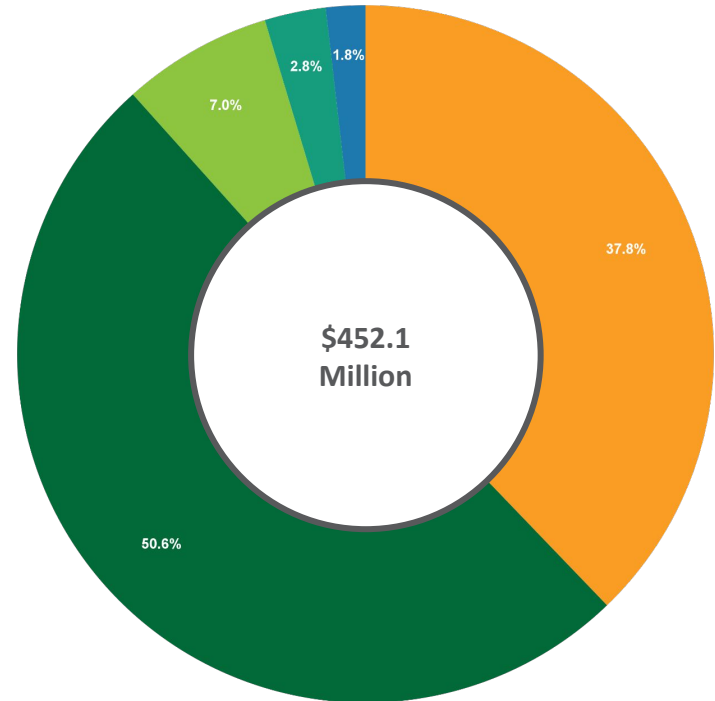


FY 2025 Adopted Expenses by Function
(% of total expenses)



Fixed expenses account for 37.8% of all expenses
School-based budgets account just over 50%
Central Office expenses account for about 12%

FY 2026 Proposed Expenses by Function
(% of total expenses)



● Fixed Expenses ● School Budgets ● CO Direct Support to Schools ● CO Administration ● CO Direct Services to Schools

Staffing Changes - Totals



Department	What's Included?	FY25 Adopted*	FY26 Proposed	Change
Direct Service to Schools	Instructional coaching, health services, school psychologists, speech and language	137.5	107.5	-30
Direct Support to Schools	Curriculum, school leadership, family engagement, security, transportation, special education, welcome center, buildings & grounds	144	124	-20
Administration	Superintendent, BOE, Finance, Talent, Operations, Enrollment, Communications	76	67.5	-8.5
Total Budgeted in Central Office	16% reduction	357.5	299	-58.5
General Education Teaching Positions	All teaching positions other than special education, bilingual resource, or TESOL	974	925.5	-48.5
All Other School-Based Positions	Administration, clerical, counseling, social work, paraeducators (non-SPED)	567.3	558.6	-8.7
District Allocated Positions to Schools	Special education, bilingual, and TESOL teachers, security, nursing, custodial	1060.1	1061.4	1.3
Total School-Based Positions	2% reduction	2,601.4	2,545.5	-55.9
Grand Total Positions		2,958.9	2,844.5	-114.4

* The FY2025 Adopted budget column does not include positions that were restored with one-time funding after the adoption of the budget or positions that were created and added through grant funding after the adoption of the budget. As a result, schools and departments may experience larger reductions than those reflected here, but one-time and grant funding positions cannot be sustained in the absence of funding.

Budget Reductions in Recent Years



Over the last 11 years, the district has mitigated almost \$200 million in costs and has eliminated 645 positions to adopt balanced budgets each year.

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21*	FY22*	FY23*	FY24*	FY25	FY26	TOTAL
Budget Mitigation Amounts	\$24.2	\$30.2	\$26.2	\$24.8	\$12.0	–	–	–	\$10.2	\$40.9	\$30.0	\$198.5
Total Budget (not including COVID relief funds)	\$429.4	\$422.3	\$420.9	\$415.8	\$429.8	\$426.9	\$422.9	\$422.7	-	\$429.4	\$452.1	
% Mitigated	5.6%	7.2%	6.2%	6.0%	2.8%	–	–	-	-	9.5%	6.6%	
Positions Eliminated/Added (including COVID relief funded positions in the FY22 column)												
Schools	(65.5)	(215.4)	(57.5)	1.7	36.0	–	218.6**	–	(12)	(309.9)	(55.9)	(459.9)
Central Office	(12.7)	(20.4)	(28.5)	(22.2)	(3.0)	–	47.0**	–	(12.5)	(73.9)*	(58.5)	(184.7)

* Fiscal years 2020-21 through 2023-2024 did not require extraordinary mitigation measures due to COVID relief funds and high vacancy rates during the pandemic.

** Positions were added to schools and central office using COVID relief funds over the course of FY21 through FY24, but for simplicity we included the maximum number of positions funded with COVID relief funds in the FY22 column.

We continue to advocate for additional funding from the State



Legislative Ask	Status	Impact on Deficit
Fully fund the special education excess cost grant at 100%	<i>In Governor's budget for FY27 Passed by legislature for FY25</i>	\$1.3M
Introduce a special education factor to the ECS formula and increase ECS funding to support this factor	House Bill 7277 proposes a grant equivalent to a 50% weight for special education	TBD
Sustain the 58% cap on general education magnet tuition	<i>In Governor's budget for FY26</i>	N/A - already accounted for
Support the full funding of the ECS formula (as planned with the phase-in acceleration)	<i>In Governor's budget for FY26</i>	N/A - already accounted for
Fund specific targeted programmatic opportunities in the Hartford Public Schools aligned to state and city priorities	<i>In Governor's budget for FY27 for special education pilot programs</i>	\$0

The additional \$6.7M would go toward restoring the high-risk reductions



High-risk reduction items	Restored funding	Strategic Alignment & Impact
Student Support & Success Centers for on-track graduation at HPHS, Weaver, and Bulkeley	\$0.4M	Whole and Healthy Students
Full service community school lead agency funding - amount not covered by North Hartford Ascends Pipeline or Full Service Community Schools grant	\$1.0M	Expansive Learning and Opportunity
Hope Academy program for on track graduation	\$0.9M	Whole and Healthy Students
Opportunity Academy	\$0.7M	Whole and Healthy Students
ReadyCT: career pathways at Bulkeley, HPHS, Weaver, and Pathways CTRIS: Bulkeley, HPHS, Kinsella and Weaver 9th grade academies	\$0.5M	Expansive Learning and Opportunity
Central-based coaching positions (19 total, reduce by 5)	\$0.5M	Skilled and Diverse Teams
Update our vacancy assumption from 6% to 5% based on our new contracts and the plan to fill additional teacher and support professional roles	\$2.7M	Skilled and Diverse Teams
TOTAL	\$6.7M	



Board of Education Request



We are also requesting additional funding from the City



- Motion to amend the motion on the table: That the Board of Education adopts the proposed FY 2025-26 Itemized Estimate of Expenditures in the amount of \$452,110,104 effective July 1, 2025, in order to pass a balanced budget.

Resolution:

- Furthermore, the board and the Superintendent will continue to look for ways and funding to fully restore services and programs which had to be eliminated or reduced in order to pass a balanced budget, and to advocate for the needs of Hartford Public Schools.
- Whereas
 - Hartford Public Schools has faced flat funding and a structural deficit for over a decade, which has required the board to make \$170 million in cuts to balance the budget since 2016.
 - The budget process for 2025-2026 began with a projected \$30 million dollar deficit
 - District staff have already identified \$15.3 in reductions to services to close this gap.
 - Revenue projections leave a remaining budget deficit of \$6.7 million
 - The programs and services that would need to be cut without an additional \$6.7 million have been identified by the district and the superintendent
- Be it resolved that
 - **The Hartford Board of Education formally requests that the City of Hartford identify an additional appropriation of \$6.7 million to fund essential programs.**