



Good Evening, my name is Robin Nelson and I live at 51 Arrowhead Way. I have a 5th grader at Tokeneke, a 7th grader at Middlesex, and an 8th grader who will be attending Darien High School next year. Along with Carol Kennedy, I am Budget Co-Chair for the CDSP, and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

We appreciate that a key goal of Dr. Addley's proposed budget is to protect class sizes, as highlighted in the Superintendent's Budget Presentation. However, we are concerned that there is not enough funding in Budget Control to maintain optimal elementary class sizes, especially in light of recent enrollment trends. We appreciate that predicting enrollment can be difficult, and recognize the thoroughness of the Milone & Macbroom enrollment study upon which our current budget is based. However, our town is in the middle of massive change. Downtown revitalization, new multi-family developments, and having one of the best school districts in the state are all things that drive new families to Darien. These additional factors make future enrollment unpredictable. Already, the 2019-20 actual enrollment is 14 more students than the consultant's "High" projection model. Likewise, factoring in January 2020 actual enrollment, our projected 2020-21 enrollment is forecast to be 10 more students than the "High" enrollment projection, and 22 more students than forecast in the current budget.¹ Since October 1st, we have had 10 net new elementary students, which results in five sections at the "tipping point" of potentially needing another section. Our primary concern is that the proposed budget has only four teachers in Budget Control, and no funding for a potential ELL teacher.

Class sizes at the elementary level continue to be an essential piece of our educational success. As recently as 6 years ago, Darien parents advocated for the Board of Ed to decrease its elementary class sizes to the "optimal" levels that were consistent with other DRG A districts. Fortunately, since that time, the Board of Ed prioritized the necessity of maintaining optimal class sizes. Today, we would like to reiterate this need, specifically with regard to the 5 sections that are projected to be above optimal, where a new section would be needed. We ask that you carefully assess whether Budget Control has adequate funding to maintain optimal class sizes, given our current enrollment trend. Additionally, we feel that Budget Control should also include funds to cover an ELL teacher, if needed.

In closing, we would like to thank Dr. Addley for his stated goal of protecting class sizes in a difficult budget year. Thank you again for your careful analysis and deliberation in support of sustaining excellence in Darien schools.

¹ Based on the District's updated Schedule M enrollment projection, distributed as part of the January 21, 2020 Board of Education Q&A materials, which forecast total 2020-2021 enrollment at 4,644 students.