



NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION

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www.newfairfieldschools.org

April 23, 2026

Via Email:

New Fairfield Board of Finance
New Fairfield Board of Selectmen

Re: Request for Supplemental Appropriation for Special Education Necessary to Balance the Budget of the New Fairfield Board of Education for FY 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen:

I am writing pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222 to formally notify you that the New Fairfield Board of Education (the “Board”) anticipates a shortfall in its fiscal year 2026 budget and must request a supplemental appropriation in order to end the fiscal year in balance, as required by law. This projected shortfall is the result of unanticipated expenditures beyond the Board’s control associated with legally mandated special education services.

Below, I set forth the nature and extent of the projected overages, and describe the measures taken by the Administration of the New Fairfield Public Schools (the “Administration”) to balance the budget prior to submitting this request. At this point, the Administration estimates a shortfall for the remainder of the current fiscal year in an amount not to exceed \$455,678.

The Board was forced to exceed the budgeted amount for unanticipated expenditures to comply with federal law to provide appropriate special education programming for students as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Much of this overage is accounted for by a 50% increase in additional special education students who required educational placement in out-of-district special education facilities. These students were not anticipated to require outplacement or projected for outplacement at the time of the preparation of the Board’s budget for the current fiscal year. Some of the students moved to New Fairfield after the preparation of the Board’s budget for the current fiscal year.

In other words, there was not any way for the Board or Administration to foresee these costs. Federal and state special education laws require that the New Fairfield Board of Education pay the tuition and related costs, such as specialized transportation, for such outplacements. These unanticipated outplacement and transportation costs total \$1,336,640.

The Administration has taken numerous steps to attempt to balance the budget. The staff was informed of a budgetary freeze, and the administration has implemented close monitoring of all expenditures and has limited non-essential spending across departments. In addition, all remaining special education contingency funds have been fully expended to reduce the deficit.

Further, the district is actively pursuing reimbursement for special education outplacements through the State's Excess Cost grant pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-76g. However, this funding is limited, as it only applies to eligible individual student costs that exceed 4.5 times the district's per pupil expenditure, and is reimbursed at a rate of approximately 68%. As a result, a significant portion of these unanticipated expenses are not covered by state funding.

Finally, at its January 15, 2026 meeting, the Board approved the designation of \$65,225 in fiscal year 2025 unexpended funds to help offset the special education deficit. Despite these efforts, the Board does not have any remaining discretionary funds from which to make up these overages.

Concurrently, the Administration has undertaken a comprehensive review of special education programming to identify opportunities to expand the continuum of supports and services within the District's public schools. As part of this effort, for example, a pilot program at New Fairfield High School has provided expanded access to more intensive therapeutic support to serve students who need increased support to access and engage in school. Early indicators suggest this approach is increasing student engagement and supporting students in accessing their education within the district.

The Board respectfully requests that the Town of New Fairfield take prompt action on this matter. Given the time-sensitive nature of this request, please contact Dr. Craw at your earliest convenience to outline the steps the Board and the Administration must take in order to obtain the funds necessary to balance the Board's current fiscal year budget.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Dominic Cipollone
Chairman, New Fairfield Board of Education

cc: Kenneth G. Craw, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Adam Lawrence, Town Finance Director
Terry Friedman, Town Treasurer
Members of the New Fairfield Board of Education
Carrie DePuy, BOE Director of Business and Operations