



**For Immediate Release:** June 16, 2023

## **Failure to Improve Schools' Indoor Air Quality Risks Student, Staff Health**

*Educators and school staff respond to press report of millions in grant requests denied to districts in need of critical heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades*

**Hartford** - Teachers, paraeducators and support personnel today are reacting to a Hearst Connecticut Media investigation revealing state officials rejecting nearly \$100 million in previously allocated school indoor air quality (IAQ) initiative resources. Leaders and members of the Board of Education (BOE) Union Coalition join district administrators and municipal leaders in denouncing the denials and urging action to expedite approval of dismissed applications.

"We are grateful for the funding that allows districts to improve their indoor air quality, but the structure of the grant process needs to be evaluated," said Connecticut Education Association (CEA) President Kate Dias. "In the interim, we urge the state to continue working with districts whose grants were rejected, so they can make the needed technical changes to their applications and resubmit them for funding. This process must be transparent and equitable with priority given to schools with the greatest need in order to keep all our schools healthy and safe places to learn and work."

"When 80 out of 130 school districts are denied grants to update their air quality system, we are leaving students and staff in jeopardy," said Cynthia Ross-Zweig, Para Council President for CSEA SEIU Local 2001. "When we are already facing significant staffing shortages, the state should be supporting districts with this basic health safety measure."

"The process of distributing resources needs to be redesigned in a way that prioritizes high-need districts," said Joanie Amato, who sits on the legislature's School IAQ Task Force. "What is needed is a focus on equity and public health, particularly since Connecticut has one of the largest wealth gaps in the nation. A 'one-size fits all' competitive approach won't succeed if the goal is to bridge that gap," added Amato, a member of the West Haven Federation of Teachers.

Today's reporting demonstrates the need for improved collaboration in the application process between the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS), which administers the grant program, and individual school districts. BOE Union Coalition leaders recognize previous changes to address this concern and urge the agency to more robustly engage those directly involved and make further changes accordingly.

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Link -

Jun. 16, 2023 CT Insider: [Millions unspent: State criticized for denying dozens of grants to improve air quality in CT schools](#)

*The Board of Education Union Coalition represents over 60,000 public school employees (teachers and non-certified education personnel) across the state and includes members in the following labor federations and their affiliated unions: AFSCME, AFT Connecticut, CEA, CSEA, SEUI, CEUI, MEUI, and UAW.*

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