

Claudia Phillips
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

Good Evening to the members of the Appropriations Committee and all those present today,

My name is Claudia Phillips, I am a 17 year resident of Bridgeport CT and a mother of three. My daughters and son have all attended traditional, magnet and public charter schools in our city of Bridgeport.

I come before you in utter shock and disbelief at the Lamont administration's proposal to cut funding from the very schools who are consistently closing the achievement gap in underserved communities like mine.

These public charter schools are already severely underfunded and struggling to keep their doors open. These are schools serving our most poor and disadvantaged. Is this administration really proposing to balance their state budget by taking away a lifeline from struggling Black and Latino families like mine?

If this is allowed, then where do we draw the line?

Everyone talks about closing the educational gap in communities like mine, including this administration, yet they are proposing to take away 4 million dollars from the very schools who are in fact, successfully closing the educational gap? This sounds more to me like they want to continue supporting systematic oppression, keeping our communities poor, uneducated, weak and at risk. Why else would they want to take away from schools that are successfully educating our Black and Latino children?

Our kids are shattering expectations, tearing down disgusting stereotypes that have been imposed by those that want to keep minorities oppressed. Many members of this committee are as proud of these kids as I am and fight for them every day.

So why would the Lamont administration take away instead of increasing much needed financial support for our public charters?

You have heard me talk about my twin daughters and son, they are my pride and joy.

Isabella and Lauren are currently in their 3rd year of college at Boston College and Bucknell University. My son is a senior at Amistad High School in New Haven. He struggled with learning disabilities throughout his time in school, but thanks be to God and his opportunity to attend Achievement First he has now received 7 college acceptance letters.

The Phillips family is not one of means and neither are the other families who send their kids to public charter schools. But what we together are is a fiercely determined community that is not

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going to sit back while our kids continue to be hurt by elected leaders who claim to support them, while ignoring the crisis our youth lives everyday.

Just last week another 18 year old was being mourned in our city. What if his life was different? What if elected leaders and each and everyone of us, valued him so much, and poured into him so much, that his life story would be one of triumph and inspiration and not what is today; a headstone with yet another life cut short?

This committee fought hard for us last year. Our sons and daughters, our moms and dads can not even begin to thank you for your bold determination to do right by our kids.

Today we ask you again to lock arms with us to protect our kids by supporting the very schools changing their lives and their communities.

I ask that you say no to cuts to charter school funding. Thank you and God Bless you.

Respectfully,
Claudia