

Bridgeport City Council President Aidee Nieves
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee, and thanks for your time this evening. My name is Aidee Nieves, I am the Bridgeport City Council President, I serve the 137th district and I am a parent in the City of Bridgeport.

I want to begin by thanking the members of this caucus for their leadership.

I'm also here to encourage you as committee members to redouble your efforts to ensure that our state residents and particularly our highest need communities receive the resources and support they so desperately need through the public education budget.

Today I am here speak on an issue that I believe is at the root cause of most of today's social ills in urban communities. That is the issue of inadequate and under resourced public school education for Connecticut's black and latino children. As City Council President, I have a responsibility to all students regardless of the type of public school they attend. I fight every day as a leader in my city to serve our most poor and disadvantaged and I know this Committee aims to do the same. And yet, I am disheartened to see in the Lamont Administration's new budget does not fully support our city. I saw they made some cuts to the budget for our public charter schools so our public charter students will remain severely underfunded. Charter schools are an important part of the choice available to students in Bridgeport. I do not want to see this administration balance the state budget on the backs of poor Black and Latino students.

The power of a quality education is the greatest equalizer for our children, I see it everyday. Our home state of Connecticut continues to have the largest achievement gap in the country and has failed horribly in providing access to a quality education to Black and Latino children in our state. Our state's public charter schools overwhelmingly serve low-income students of color. But because of how Connecticut funds public education, the 10,000 mostly low-income, predominantly black and brown public charter school students have been profoundly underfunded.

But we need to do more for ALL public schools, through your leadership we can do the following:

1. Provide funding equity for all types of public schools, including public

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charter schools.

2. Direct more resources to our children with the greatest challenges, particularly our special education population.
3. Mandate that school curriculums are geared to prepare our children for tomorrow's jobs.

As a parent in the City of Bridgeport I didn't have the luxury to differentiate between traditional public, public charter, magnet or votech I simply wanted a quality option. I am here today because we must provide equity for all public schools. I know just how much and how important it is that our state has great educational options for parents, especially those who look like me and who don't feel like they have many options to choose from.

The political agenda of adults whose children have access to quality schools should never come before the well being of our state's most vulnerable and underserved children who are relying on you to level the playing field.

Thank you for your time this evening.