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Testimony Against Bill to Cut Funds from Bridgeport Public Schools

The city of Bridgeport is home to minorities and families from low-income backgrounds. For many students of color, education grants us the opportunities necessary to escape our lives' current reality and have a future beyond what our parents could provide. For many students, our schools are the source of food for their families, with Grab n Go meals programs. For many students, after-school programs and sports teams are a way to escape a home that may not be filled with love or to avoid going home to an empty house because their parents are out working for minimum wage, trying to keep the lights on. Our public schools are not just a place where students receive an education but are supported by a community. A place they can go to for safety and provision. However, a cut to our budget will be a cut in resources our schools can use to provide for their students. What can this look like for my fellow students of color? Students can go hungry because the school can no longer give additional meals to struggling families. A student can no longer play soccer, a sport they love, because they cannot afford the equipment and uniform needed to play. Which was provided for free by the school, but due to lack of funds, they cannot provide for their students in sports. Budget cuts can be the end of spring plays adored by students because schools cannot financially back the production.

Now I would not say anything if I knew that the money we would lose from our schools would be reimbursed into our community. The same money that the schools once used to help students and be a further outreach into the community, is used to make up for the resources that the schools may no longer provide due to budget cuts. Suppose that the same money would be used to bring more internships and apprenticeships to students of color, allowing them to see the

opportunities they can have and are available to them. Suppose that money would go into investing in our small businesses that the pandemic has severely impacted. Suppose the money would go towards our local YMCA programs and boys and girls club so that after-school activities remain accessible for free for students. However, that is not what is being discussed. Understand that cuts to our public schools worsen the quality of education that students of color receive and negatively impact Bridgeport's community as a whole.

The pandemic has taught us that education is crucial for our students of color, and for too long, there have been racial and economic inequalities that have prevailed within our public schools. Cutting the budget from Bridgeport Public Schools is only going to widen that gap within education. Therefore, I urge you not to be a part of the problem, but the solution. I urge you not to continue this narrative that students of color's education and communities are not worth fighting for. I urge you to decide that all students' futures are worth fighting for and help pave the way towards a future where racial and economic inequality within our school systems no longer exists. The first step is deciding not to cut the budget.