

March 9, 2021

Greetings Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator McCrory, Representative Felipe, and Members of the Appropriations Education Sub Committee,

My name is Darlenne Cazarin Berrios and I am a senior at Common Ground High School. I want to first begin with who I am today and my growth over the past 4 years in order for you all to get a better picture of my message. In my freshman year, I was a young girl who desperately wanted to get out of New Haven because I didn't see it as my home or my community. I felt disconnected from everything and was very angry. Angry at how marginalized communities were being treated and angry at the fact that I was powerless to do anything about it. But that changed immediately when I was introduced to Common Ground. My relationship with Common Ground has been going strong for 4 years now (our anniversary just passed so thank you thank you) and I can't express how deep my love runs for it. Common Ground is a place where it not only teaches you the basic English, Science, Math, and Social Studies, but also teaches you how you can make a change. How to advocate and create a vision for not only yourself, but for your community. It provided me with the tools I needed in order to build my foundation of what leader I wanted to be and most importantly, what person I aspired to be.

Today, the person presenting right before you, is very proud of the person she is and the journey she has taken to be here today. I have used the power I have to make a change in my community and make a difference. For example, I am a leader of SPEAK Club, Common Ground's first multicultural club for undocumented and first generation immigrants, and everyday I push our mission forward: "building strong, sustainable relationships while discussing and educating others on our experiences and barriers." This motto ties us, a diverse group of 30 students, together like family. This wouldn't have been possible without the support and love from CG. I am very lucky and privileged to be a part of this amazing community and wouldn't have it any other way.

I ask that you help make sure all Common Ground High School students continue to have this same opportunity. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Darlenne Cazarin Berrios
Student
Common Ground High School
385 Springside Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515

Greetings Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and Members of the Education Committee,

To see the world as it is with no filter is a powerful way of changing the rotation of the world. To see the demons roaming freely and wildly, to see the corpses hidden under the carpet, to even feel the tortured souls is all a step; but it's what you do about it that truly creates an impact. That is what Common Ground High School teaches you to do.

My name is Darlenne Cazarin Berrios and I am a senior at Common Ground High School in New Haven. Common Ground is a place where it not only teaches you the basic English, Science, Math, and Social Studies, but also teaches you how you can make a change. How to advocate and create a vision for not only yourself, but for your community. It is the vision and advocacy that makes the sun shine brighter and the stars dance under the moonlight. With no voice or vision where would the world be today? If all the people shut their colored eyes tightly and locked their brain away as storage the world would be madness. No voice to attack the evil, no brain to create an improved future.

Common Ground has pushed me to discover myself and be the best me I can be. It encourages me to embrace who I am, to know when to laugh when I make a mistake, and to work harder everyday. It is a place that gives every student a platform and opportunities to this day. Common Ground is a unified and diverse community as well.

Common Ground has given me the leadership skills to change the universe and I ask that you help make sure all Common Ground High School students continue to have this same opportunity by passing SB 948, SB 949, and SB 886. Thank you.