

Written Testimony for the Appropriations Committee regarding the following:

- H.B. 6439: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.
- S.B. 886: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION.

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Ryan Brown and I am a Grade 7 Mathematics Teacher in Bridgeport, CT. First, I wanted to express my gratitude for you all letting me submit testimony. Second, I wanted to state that I oppose acts S.B. 886 and H.B. 6439, which both cover the following Bill language: An act implementing the governor's budget recommendations concerning education.

Bridgeport is the largest city in Connecticut with the highest student population, many of which are of color. Since joining the teaching force officially in August 2013, I have witnessed significant money (in the millions most times) continue to be taken from Bridgeport Public Schools. This has led to many colleagues either losing their jobs or being put in other positions in other schools. More importantly, this has taken very important human resources away from our students in the form of teachers, instructional coaches, interventionists, specialists, support staff like paraprofessionals, and home-school coordinators. My question to you all is what did we (specifically our students) do to deserve this?

We can have a debate on the political structure and how the system was created to fund schools' certain ways but the bottom line is that our students did nothing wrong to deserve to be grossly underfunded as they've been since they've entered the public-school system. So why must they continue to pay the price for circumstances they did not create? Our students, just like all students, deserve to be given what they need in order to succeed. This is what equity is supposed to be.

As stated briefly before, Bridgeport has the highest rate of Black and Brown students in their student population. The inequity of funding is something that has been a fact for many districts like Bridgeport prior to the pandemic. We are all aware of how COVID-19 has exacerbated unfortunate circumstances for many families. The virus has caused urban areas to feel the unfortunate effects of the virus more so than their suburban counterparts due to overall health and the need for many to work during the most dangerous periods of the pandemic because many residents are essential workers. And yet, urban districts continue to get money pulled away from them. What needs to be realized is that decisions like these have led and will continue to lead to the stark wealth differences, opportunities, and circumstances between districts we see today. This will widen the gaps that exist.

I recognize that this testimony did not include any financial figures or data points to help drive my point further. However, I wanted to reiterate my role as a teacher and give you all perspective from the ground floor. Watching my students lose human resources in the form of the positions listed previous and losing tangible resources like access to technology like chromebooks and/or interactive boards during instruction, educational materials like consumable textbooks/workbooks, and access to WiFi is devastating. Learning that even more money can be taken from them over the next two years surpasses the devastation.

Written Testimony for the Appropriations Committee regarding the following:

- H.B. 6439: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.
- S.B. 886: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION.

Let us view individual technology use for example. Yes, Bridgeport has reaped the benefits of emergency funds through the COVID-19 relief bill. Yes, students were able to gain access to a brand-new device to use during the 2020-2021 school year. However, we have been here before back in 2013 when the district began to receive brand new chromebooks. Those chromebooks were great but there was no money available to deal with normal repairs so by the time we got to 2020, there were little to no devices available for students to use. We were still held to the same standard as many one-to-one device districts when it came to completing assessments though. To support the technology, we received through the relief bill, we must gain funding to create the infrastructure that allows our students to always have access. Losing money will not give us the opportunity to do that, and this again is just one of many examples as to why districts like Bridgeport cannot afford to lose funds.

I write this testimony asking if you all could reconsider this budget and fund districts based on need. I ask that you all take the time to recognize how severely underfunded districts in District Reference Group I are and have been for decades. And before there is a response given to my testimony stating that circumstances are circumstances, my rebuttal to that rhetoric is simply this: what did our children do to deserve to be given less equitable resources than other students in our state? Thank you all for your time and your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ryan Brown
Resident of Danbury and Bridgeport Public Schools Teacher
Ryan.A.Brown21@gmail.com or RBrown1@bridgeportedu.net