



Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee on H.B. 6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Pastor William McCullough, FaithActs for Education

March 9, 2021

Co-Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Walker, Ranking Members Senator Miner and Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Pastor William McCullough. I am Senior Pastor of Russell Temple CME Church in Bridgeport, the President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater Bridgeport and Vicinity, and the Founder of FaithActs for Education. We are people of faith building power to get our children the education they deserve.

When I moved to Bridgeport, I had to change my son's school 5 times in 5 years, just to make sure he got the education he deserved. Now my son is at UConn and my daughter is an English teacher at Central High School in Bridgeport. This work is deeply personal to me. It's even inspired me to go back to school to get my bachelor's and master's degrees.

I get up every day to fight for my parishioners, their children, and children across this state to not only have the same opportunity as my children, but better. Because that's what we ultimately want as parents, community leaders, and policymakers, right? For the next generation to be better off.

And the hardest pill to swallow is that couldn't be farther from the truth in Connecticut.

But I am able to speak with you today not with a weary soul but with a hopeful heart because I serve a God that can do all things! And he has empowered you to do something about it today!

I am here on behalf of FaithActs' 80 congregations and 11,000 parishioners across this state to oppose H.B. 6439, specifically, the governor's proposed education budget. I urge you to modify the budget to align with S.B. 948, which is currently in the Education Committee. The Bible says "call those things which are not as though they were until they become what you call them (Romans 4:17)." I'm speaking it into existence!

I will let others get into the details of what this bill does. I'd like to use my few minutes to tell you what aligning the budget with SB 948 means.

Very simply, if this budget is modified, it means Connecticut can begin walking down the path of righteousness.



A history-making transformation from a state shamed by its educational racism and classism to a state where Education Justice is the word of the day and the law of the land.

Transformed from a state that is known for inflicting countless wrongs on generations of students, into a state where all public school children regardless of race, class, language, or zip code have the tools they need to succeed.

Transformed from a state best known for the largest opportunity and wealth gaps, into a state where every Black and Brown baby's future points to a corner office instead of a prison cell.

I say today we are at a moment in our state's history that may not come again for another decade. And it's taken a lot of pain and suffering to get here, so we'd be foolish to squander this opportunity.

So you, the members of this committee, have a choice to make:

Will you continue to uphold a discriminatory school funding system that says Black and Brown children don't matter? Will you make excuses about deficits and politics? Or will you rise and be bold enough to say not one more child, not on my watch!

For too long, Black and Brown hopes, futures, and yes, bodies, have been put in the ground by the very systems created to protect them.

Calls for justice are ringing out across this state and across the country.

But Black lives can't only matter after our children are dead. They must matter while they're alive and breathing. So today we're calling on you because you have the power to turn these slogans and hashtags into laws.

And remember, history isn't as forgiving as the present. You can forever be remembered as the lawmakers who didn't have the courage to do what's right or you can inscribe your names in the ledger of those who brought education justice to all Connecticut's children.

I believe you will rise to the moment. I know you can. Thank you and God Bless.

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