



Written 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

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 Francis Nunez. I'm a community organizer with FaithActs for Education but today, I come to you as a Connecticut resident for 11 years and a mom to a beautiful 16 month old baby girl named Rosie. I've put a picture of her up behind me so you can look at it every time I make a point in the next 2 minutes.

Do you see that little girl behind me? Her district school as of right now is Cesar Batalla elementary school in the west end of Bridgeport.

Cesar Batalla is one of the most densely populated schools in Bridgeport. It serves over 1,200 students in 1st-5th grade. It also spends one of the lowest amounts of dollars to educate each child in the city, because the pot is already small and it has to be evenly distributed amongst school populations no matter how high enrollment numbers are.

Cesar Batalla is a huge campus, as you would expect from an elementary school that houses more than a thousand students. But it is staffed similarly to a public school with half the students. So Rosie will be doomed to sit in large classroom sizes. My baby was born 2 months early so she's small for her age. I shudder at the thought of Rosie being lost at Cesar Batalla: Literally and figuratively.

I wish I could say that I'm going to send her to her district school no matter what, but I'm smarter than that and I want more for my daughter than what she's headed towards. So my options are as follows: I move out of Bridgeport and into a more affluent city in Connecticut, which goes against my values as a lifelong city girl and grassroots community organizer. I can move out of Connecticut altogether, which saddens me because I've spent more than a decade making this state home and I truly love living here, or you can reject H.B 6439 and make sure to pass a budget that equitably funds Bridgeport and other school districts. And then, I'll keep organizing to make sure the money goes where it should, which is to schools and students who need it most, schools like Cesar Batalla.

Rosie's future is literally in your hands. Look at the face behind me and think of it while you vote on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Francis Nunez
159 Grove Street
Bridgeport CT, 06605

FaithActs for Education
857 Post Road, Suite 310
Fairfield, CT 06824