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RE: Funding of Charter School in Danbury

Through the tumultuous year of 2020 we as a society had to face the ugly reality of systemic racism. Many leaders joined the masses as we condemned bigotry and fought for equity. In this fight our CT legislators came together and in a unified voice expressed their solidarity and commitment to ensure that Connecticut became an example of social justice and equal opportunities for all.

Today I am here again for the third straight year. To ask that your commitment to equity and fairness is not tainted by politics. I come again to ask you to have the courage to do what is right for the black and brown community in Danbury. A community that for the past 7 years has fought like hell to have at least one educational option available to their community. A group of parents and community leaders who have swamped your inboxes with emails and phone asking for help. We have asked dozens of legislators for support and most have given us moral support, kind words and then sent us out in the cold to face the realities of our disconnected representatives.

Our plight is not a political battle over charter schools but of equity. A plight from a city that is lagging at least 40 years behind other major cities in CT in equity and representation. As of now we are the deep south in the fight for equity and the legislators up in Hartford have abandoned us to our fate. Did northern abolitionists say to those seeking freedom in the south "that is a problem between you and your representatives". Did the civil rights movement just stay in the friendly confines of northern cities and decided not to intervene in the deep and racist south. No they didn't! From the North buses of students went two the south to fight for equity. Did they care if it wasn't their jurisdiction? No! They didn't! And along with brave legislators, governors and even presidents they did what is right and they intervened.

Today I am asking for this type of courage. Today I am asking the appropriations committee to allocate 1.2 million dollars from the surplus in the line item charter school fund and allow the disenfranchised black and brown community in Danbury to have the educational opportunity we have fought so hard to achieve..

We have 50% of our ELL students dropping out. We face over a decade of lip service where recruitment of especially Latino teachers is non-existent. We have many teachers like myself that for decades have had to drive for hours to seek work. Our students in Danbury are failing and no one cares, Our community is being choked and disrespected by Bob Godfrey and Julie Kushner and no one dares to intervene. Some state leaders have spoken out publicly in support for our plight but none want to take the extra steps and actually request that the money we need is allocated. We secured 25 million for our own building and have pleaded for a compromise

and Bob Godfrey mocks us in public while Julie Kushner politely tells us to just capitulate and disappear. For years legislative leaders have been telling us there is a problem between the Danbury Delegation and the community.

That is not fair because the stipulation that made our community after fighting so hard to get a school approved run into the limbo we are now in. The state legislature cannot wash its hands off and pretend our community does not exist. These legislators will not budge because they had told us so. To these white legislators the status quo is ok. To them everything is fine in Danbury because it is not their children at stake because it is not their community. They are fine with confining a massive latino community that is now 47% of the city and over 60% of the students. With virtually no latino educational leaders. They aren't fighting for us. We on our own now have to advocate for a Latino superintendent while they are dead silent. Julie Kushner and Bob Godfrey are perpetuating the systemic racism that exists in Danbury.

We the disenfranchised Latino community have founded LEAD to fight back. But we need your help. Their choke hold in our local politics is just too strong and it will take a while for us to pry their fingers from our necks.

Please do what is right. Whether through SB948, or by changing the wording to the charter school funding law so that the approved schools have funding. Please do something. We humbly beg you and as you continue to fight for equity and create lasting change through legislation that combat systemic racism please please Help Danbury and our plight for educational equity and allow us to have at least one charter school. We can't continue to be the only city that doesn't have this kind of choice when we are the city that needs it the most. The state has already approved us to operate a charter in Danbury. Please help us open our school.