



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

Jamilah Prince-Stewart, Executive Director, 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 Jamilah Prince-Stewart and I am the executive director of FaithActs for Education. We are 80 churches, 500 members, 4500 committed voters, and 11,000 congregants strong.

I'm here to oppose H.B. 6439, specifically, Governor Lamont's proposed education budget and to ask you to modify the budget to align with S.B. 948, which is currently in the Education Committee.

A few weeks ago I stood with many of you and your colleagues on the freezing cold steps outside the Capitol.

We were there to launch our Education Justice Now campaign, to call for an end to Connecticut's racist and classist school funding formula.

And I'm here to say now is the time.

The current funding formula is racist and classist funding.

On Park Avenue in Fairfield County, a school educating a Bridgeport child receives roughly \$14,000 for their education, while a Fairfield child receives roughly \$19,000.

In the same city, a charter school student receives roughly \$11,000.

There is a \$640 million dollar gap between the way Connecticut funds education for white students and students of color.

We don't need another court case, study or task force to tell us how unjust this is. It's criminal. It's immoral.

Now I know some people in the Capitol will say this is an expensive proposition. That Connecticut doesn't have the money to pay for this.



I don't buy it. The cost of funding educational justice for all our children pales in comparison to the dollars spent today and tomorrow on prisons, poverty, homelessness, hunger and social services.

What would you rather pay for? Broken systems that make it so people can live poor ... or the schools and tools that can equip our children to rise up out of poverty.

Connecticut has a \$20 billion budget. Funding education is not expensive. Prisons are expensive. Poverty is expensive. Dreams deferred are expensive. And we are paying with our lives.

When policymakers tell us we need to wait or there's not enough money, I am reminded of what Dr. King said of those who "prefer a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice ... who paternalistically believe they can set the timetable for another man's freedom...."

We will not wait for freedom any longer. We're calling on every leader in this state to do right by our children and to do right by Connecticut. We demand Education Justice Now!

We're here to oppose HB 6439 and ask that you modify the proposed budget to reflect the values of justice and equity in education. We're calling on champions in the Legislature who are willing to stand up and do what's right for our children. Now let's work together and get this across the finish line this legislative session. Our children can't afford to wait any longer.

Thank you.

Jamilah Prince-Stewart
869 Orange Street, Unit 6W
New Haven, CT 06511

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