



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 Minister Elaine Thompson-Ward, and I'm from Bridgeport, Connecticut.

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

I have watched how funding discrimination has affected our community over the years. It is as easy as observing how students get to school. So many of our students are unable to get school bus service due to the cost that our district can't afford. Our children end up in danger of predators and other street elements as a result of underfunding Bridgeport. Teachers often end up spending their own money on their classroom, just to have simple things like paper to do the basics of their job.

Our students need to be taught proper math, proper reading and spelling, and about their history. They need funding to be able to learn about their heritage and not worry that lack of money is the reason they aren't learning. Not knowing about themselves has proven to affect how Black students perform in the classroom, which is why Black and Latino Studies was passed in this state. However, what is the point if there isn't enough money to afford a teacher for the class?

Hearing that Connecticut spends \$640 million more dollars to educate white students than students of color shouldn't make anyone feel good because what makes students in Greenwich better than students in Bridgeport? What reason can you give that justifies that fact? A student from Bridgeport can be sent to a school in Westport and receive a better quality of education than their siblings that never got that opportunity.

Please modify the proposed budget to reflect the values of justice and equity in education.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and leadership on this issue.

Minister Elaine Thompson-Ward
197 Sheridan Street #3
Bridgeport, CT 06610

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