



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

I'm writing 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. This would:

- Address generational underfunding by sending millions more dollars to communities that educate Black, Brown, and low-income children.
- Make funding more equitable by reflecting the learning needs of English language learners and children in communities with concentrated poverty. Right now, cities like Bridgeport and New Haven don't qualify for concentrated poverty weights.
- Fund all public schools through a needs-based formula that includes magnets, charters, and vocational-technical schools without taking money away from traditional schools.
- Eliminate the phase-in and fully fund ECS. Under current law, a second grader will be in high school before they receive their full funding.

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, 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.



Our state's education funding system is racist and classist. We spend more on educating affluent white children than low-income children and children of color. Then we spend even more to police, prosecute, and incarcerate those who are failed by our education system. I'm asking you to help make Connecticut a more just and equitable place to live.

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

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