

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 20, 2007

TESTIMONY Provided by
Paul S. Timpanelli, President & CEO
BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL BUSINESS COUNCIL

Members of the education Committee, thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is Paul Timpanelli and I am the President & CEO of the *Bridgeport Regional Business Council*, a 1,000 member business association.

In 2006, the leadership of the Business Council identified four major public policy areas as our work plan priorities in the years ahead. One of those areas was the quality of public education and closing the achievement gap clearly recognizing the direct relationship between that quest and the future economic vitality of our state.

The leadership of our organization – representing the major employers in our region – was pleased recently by the Governor's bold announcement regarding her desired plan to at long last invest more state resources in public education in our state. I am here today to inform you that the business leadership in our region supports that effort and encourages you to look at the Governor's proposed \$3.4 million commitment as the foundation from which to begin.

As a result of the reworked funding formula that the Governor proposes, Bridgeport will, finally be given the equitable treatment that its children deserve. We ask you again to use the Governor's proposed investment in Bridgeport as your foundation as this debate moves forward.

In addition, I am here today to assure you that your investment decision for Bridgeport will be a wise one. Surely our city's past history and its problems have forced many of you to say "why invest more in Bridgeport when we don't know that what we invest now is being efficiently and wisely spent?"

We are now in the initial stages of an important undertaking that will help us to answer that question. First, the Business Council, with the agreement and support of the Mayor, the school superintendent, and the Board of education, just last week hired a consultant that will develop a plan to enable the city budget to be separated from the Board of Education budget and its management. This effort is being paid for and managed by the business community. When that project is complete which will be by September 1, we have then proposed to the Board of Education and the city that we undertake a complete operational and management review of the Board of Education. That review will identify any and all efficiencies and savings within the system that we all have agreed will then be reinvested in the classroom.

I tell you this today because I know that you need the assurance that the kind of money that you are talking about being invested in Bridgeport is invested wisely. Please be assured that the business community is very much engaged – in partnership with the school system and the city – to create a transparent and accountable budget that will enable the system's funders to be assured that your money is being used efficiently and wisely.

We are here today to ask you for that needed investment and to tell you that we will demonstrate to you that that investment will be made in an efficient and operationally sound school system.

Thank you.