



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good Afternoon Chairmen Gaffey & Fleischmann and the members of the Education Committee. I am here today in support of more Educational Cost Sharing dollars for the City of Bridgeport. The Bridgeport Board of Education has made more than \$24 million in cuts over the last four years, without an increase in ECS dollars there will be a fifth. As a teacher in the Bridgeport school system I see first hand how those cuts affect our children. Classes are overcrowded, staffing is a serious problem, and we don't have enough guidance counselors, social workers, school psychiatrists and security guards. As a middle school teacher I see the state of mind in which many of our middle schoolers are in and we need these added services in our school. For many of them having school social workers and psychiatrists might be the difference between passing and failing. In this upcoming Budget, the Bridgeport Board of Education will need \$8.2 million dollars just to maintain the status quo- \$3.8 million in contractual increases, \$1.4 million in health benefits Increases and approximately \$3 million in inflation increases which were calculated at about a 1.5% increase for supplies and utilities.

Bridgeport is about to open three brand new schools. In numbers I have received from the Board of Education it will take approximately \$2.2 million dollars to open these schools. It has been over 20+ years since the city of Bridgeport has built any new schools and since last year the City is well on their way to opening four brand new schools. The City of Bridgeport has been criticized for not supporting Education as they should but City Government has stepped up to put up the bonds for such a monumental task of building new schools. If additional ECS dollars are not sent to the City then we will have new, technologically advanced buildings but not the adequate staffing and transportation needed to send our children to these new schools.

The City of Bridgeport will need an additional \$3.6 million dollars to meet some of the pressing needs they will face in this upcoming academic year. As a result of a law we passed there will be a need to add on 25 Paraprofessionals to implement an In-School Suspension Program at the cost of about \$600,000 million dollars. The City will need an additional \$2 million dollars for critical staff and supply/equipment needs. We have 19 failing schools which will need Instructional Leadership to help remove them from that

list at the cost of \$300,000 and about \$700,000 to bolster other areas of the curriculum (Art, Music, PE and Library).

Although it may seem like doom and gloom, Great things are happening in Bridgeport. The past two years we have been finalist for the prestigious Broad Award; this is an obvious indication that good things are occurring. The Bridgeport Board of Education does the most with the least (as compared to other urban centers). We want to continue working hard for our Children but we need your help. Please know that every dollar invested in the education of our children would be a dollar that would not have to go to the department of corrections. If we educate our children at a level which is equitable then we will be preparing all our kids so they can be successful. Thank you for giving me the time to testify.

Respectfully submitted by:

Representative Andres Ayala
128th District