

**Testimony for the record by Eddie A. Perez  
Mayor, City of Hartford  
Submitted to:  
The Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Committee  
February 11, 2009  
Hearing on Education Spending**

Good afternoon Chairs Harp and Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in regard to all bills pertaining to education spending.

As some of you may know, education initiatives in Hartford have been one of the staples of my administration since taking office in 2001. The City of Hartford has redesigned its curriculum, instituted challenging new standards for teacher and student success, and along with the State, created a number of highly regarded charter and magnet schools. I believe that it is one of the greatest responsibilities of elected leaders to provide the appropriate atmosphere for our school aged citizens so that they might become productive and engaged adults.

We fear that under current economic conditions this years budget will fall well short of addressing many issues surrounding appropriate and just funding for Connecticut's school system. A study released by the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) reveals that the state is under funding education by well over half a billion dollars. In Hartford, there continue to be significant efforts to improve the school system, including the construction of new magnet schools, the Mayor's Higher Education Initiative, and an inspired and invigorated Board of Education. Unfortunately, the progress that the City is making is being curbed by a severe lack of funding. The aforementioned CCJEF study reveals that the state is currently under funding the Hartford school system by over fifteen million dollars.

As Mayor of the City of Hartford I understand the difficulty associated with budgeting in the midst of a financial crisis. I also understand the consequence of an underfunded education system. Connecticut suffers from the worst achievement gap in the Nation; a reality that has hurt not just communities like Hartford, but the entire State of Connecticut. Therefore, it is the interest of not only Hartford's school aged population, but all of State's residents that I appeal to the Appropriations Committee and the General Assembly to consider the effect and importance of adequate funding for education.

This is not an issue that we, as elected officials, can hope to make better at some point in the future. While we wait, our school aged residents are becoming less and less likely to be capable students and productive individuals in our state's future workforce.

Thank You.