

Testimony of Madeleine Janover
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Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee
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Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

Hello, my name is Madeleine Janover and I am here as a teacher from Common Ground High School in New Haven. I teach history, social studies, civics, and a myriad of standards-based, rigorous off the track courses such as World Conflict, Women's Studies, community organizing. I do this in a school with the focused mission of fusing the energy and minds of our most precious resources – our children and our environment. I do this in a school driven by the goal of creating a truly sustainable, life affirming world; we want our students to be leaders in this venture; we want our students to be citizens who will be the actors, not the acted upon.

No matter what course I teach, no matter what struggle of the human condition my courses might focus on, there is an underlying theme: democracy. Yes, that extraordinary idea that people throughout history have died for, no matter what they called it. The dream, the idea that even as we speak, people in the hottest part of the world are dying for.

Because the heart of democracy is choice. Real choice, choice we help create, choice we are accountable for, choice that makes a difference in the quality of our lives, choice that gives us real opportunities. Choices that come from conscious decisions; choices we know we must pay for.

A viable democracy can not really work unless people make informed, thoughtful, inventive choices; and these kinds of choices only happen when the people are educated; educated to know how to appreciate competing ideas and competing interests and skilled enough to know how to bring them together to move ahead.

There is nothing more important than this kind of education; nothing more important than turning the words, the ideas of this kind of education into reality.

The reality is that ALL children, all young people deserve the opportunity for the best path to our best education. How ironic, indeed, how morally abusive to our very notion of democracy, that some children are denied this, especially when it doesn't have to be.

We are talking about the education of our children, and how the collective education of the adults, should be able, willing, and desirous to make that so for all of our children.

A \$14,000 contribution for some children, compared to \$9,300 for others, is just not right. We are not asking the state to mint new money, we are asking you to recognize our students are as deserving of an equal share of what already is there. We are indeed in hard times, which is precisely why we need more than ever, as history teaches us, to create opportunity for all.

Even as we deliberate here, on the other side of the world, revolution is happening that is creating a true paradigm shift in history. On that side of the world, they look to us as a model. It is all about democratic revolution – big and small. The democracy they strive for is the freedom to make real choices.

It is all about choice. Choose to really not leave any children behind. Recognize how truly strong we are as a democracy that we've come to a place in our educational history, that families can make choices about what is the best education for their children. Choose to support and make that opportunity real.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Janover