

Written Testimony on Senate Bill 1195

Before the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

March 24, 2011

Good afternoon members of the Committee. My name is Patrick MacDonald and I am a student at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk.

I'm here to talk to you about what it's like to attend school in a district that is at a disadvantage due to the current ECS formula. I've heard a lot people around the state and in my city, especially politicians, talk about how proud they are to have gone through a Connecticut public school. Yet students in my district can tell you better than anyone else that our schools aren't where they need to be – and they are not where they once used to be. Every day, we feel the pressure of the competition a global economy entails, and every day we feel the consequences of not being prepared for that competition, whether it's worrying if we can make it into that top college or edge out other applicants for a dream job.

What do our political leaders have to say about this? Year after year after year, meeting after meeting after meeting, speaker after speaker after speaker, students have heard the same thing: it's all about the children, this is for the children, we're here for the children. But we the students of Norwalk Public Schools will not be convinced that our state leaders are committed to its students' future until we see that every student is given the skills they need to be able to compete in a global economy, until every student embraces learning, and until every student can achieve their highest potential.

Now our elected officials must ask themselves what sort of public school systems they'd like for the future. Do they really want to condemn the students of Norwalk and other

communities not receiving their fair share of ECS funding, to a lackluster school system? Do they really want to further debilitate students, and make it even harder for them to compete in the world? We hear that when times are better, we can invest in our schools. But let's face it: state officials can't continue down this dangerous path of putting off the dire need for fair and equitable investment; our children, who we care for so deeply, are already falling too far behind, the stakes for Norwalk and Connecticut are already too high, and the crisis unfolding in our schools has been too long ignored, to keep pushing back what is so long overdue.

For those of us students who have younger brothers and sisters going through the school system, we can only look at them and wonder: will they have the bright future that they deserve? This state must remember that if we can build a better public school system, we can build a better Connecticut, and if we can build a better Connecticut, we can build that brighter future that we so desperately need. I hope you will pass Senate Bill 1195. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today.

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