

TESTIMONY

of Lauren Rosato
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Regarding S.B. 1195: An Act Concerning School Finance Reform. To replace the state's current mechanism for funding public school education with a long term, sustainable pupil based funding system.

Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding S.B. 1195 directed at replacing the current education funding model.

As President of The Norwalk Education Foundation, a nonprofit whose mission is to enhance the understanding, support and advocacy for educational improvements that sustain and drive student achievement for all of Norwalk's children, I work tirelessly to raise private funding to improve public education. There is a need for additional resources because our student and teacher needs are not adequately met.

Our country's public education structure is extremely complex, bureaucratic, and entrenched in an outdated operational and service delivery model that can no longer keep up with global competition. Thirty years ago, when the United States had the best public education system in the world it didn't matter, but it matters now.

It matters that Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the nation. It matters that the states with the best public education systems in our nation still lag behind other countries. It matters that our employers offshore issue visas for science and technology jobs because we can't produce enough engineers. It matters that our highest achieving districts in CT are still 1 year behind the achievement level of our neighboring state, Massachusetts.

Times have changed. You can either drag your feet in addressing the structural problems of public education, which mainly lend themselves to adult entitlements and not student needs, or you can be leaders and tackle these issues one at a time, starting with the replacement of the state's current mechanism for funding public education.

What will the outcome be if you change it? That some public school districts lose students to better charter and magnet schools in other districts? Or perhaps that some public school districts will be forced by this exodus to do their job better, and to improve their existing public schools? And what is the outcome if you don't change it? That we as a state can continue to proudly claim we have the largest achievement gap in the nation?

It's time, legislators. As a nation, we don't have 10 or 20 years to catch up to global competition. Your leadership on public education reform is needed today, not tomorrow. Please make those difficult decisions and reform the public education system of our state, starting with updating the ECS formula so it truly benefits children by improving their public schools. If you don't, you make my job of convincing

the private sector to invest philanthropic dollars in CT's public schools extremely difficult. Please pass Senate Bill 1195 to make the changes our students desperately need.