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With Stud. List
#4

Elijah Adonai's Mother

**Testimony of Gwendolyn Samuel – Meriden CT
Supporting Bill 1195, An Act Concerning School Finance Reform
Before the Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, March 24, 2011**

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding Senate Bill 1195. My name is Gwen Samuel. I am a mother of four, registered voter and a taxpayer. I live in Meriden, Connecticut. I currently have two children within the Public school system, one in elementary and another in middle school. My 12 year old son Elijah will be testifying before you today as well because students need to learn how to advocate for their needs within the classroom and amongst public policymakers. Regarding School Finance Reform, we have been studying this issue consistently since 2004 therefore I am asking you to NOT delay the necessary education reform efforts to produce a qualified workforce and stabilize Connecticut's economy anymore and begin by supporting Senate bill 1195:

1. To ensures Consistent and equitable distribution of school funding thus eliminating the "disparate funding streams for ECS and school choice options in which similar students and similar schools receive widely varying amounts of state aid.
2. Encourages transparency, efficiency, and student achievement growth
3. Ensuring effective spending within priority school district
4. "To fuel Connecticut's economic growth and strengthen its social fabric ...ensure that this state's education system is second to none in preparing every student for high-wage/high-skill jobs, entrepreneurial thinking, and responsible citizenship" and that Results based accountability must "ensure that [effective spending of funding] money truly matters in improving learning, teaching, and school administration ... to strengthen accountability standards. The intent is to establish constructive and instructive state and local mechanisms aimed at safeguarding schoolchildren's constitutional rights to an adequate education while also maximizing taxpayers' investment in public education and containing costs."

http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/EducationFunding/CCJEF_Feb_21_07.pdf

Context: Quote from race To The Top reviewer Phase two
(<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase2-applications/comments/connecticut.pdf>)

“Since 2004, the state has implemented the Connecticut Accountability For Learning Initiative (CALI) which was supposed to accelerate learning, and close achievement gaps. However, based on data provided in the proposal learning has NOT been accelerated and gaps have not closed Therefore it is hard to understand why CALI is described as having “emerging capability to succeed and is proposed as the foundational approach for the RTTT Plan even though it has supposedly been strengthen by recent 2010 legislation”

“In 2005, Connecticut Coalition For Justice in Education CCJEF Funding commissioned a firm [Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA)] to calculate the resources needed to provide all Connecticut students with an adequate education. This groundbreaking analysis was the first attempt in Connecticut to quantify the cost of the educational inputs necessary to insure that the vast majority of students have the opportunity to meet the state “goal” performance level on the state’s reading and math mastery tests and for schools to fully comply with State Board of Education and federal standards.”

http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/EducationFunding/CCJEF_Feb_21_07.pdf)

In February 2007, a report was written entitled A Framework for Adequately and Equitably Funding Connecticut’s Public Schools ECS Formula Redesign Results-Based Accountability State/Local Revenue Rebalancing by the Connecticut Coalition For Justice in Education Funding (http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/wsd/EducationFunding/CCJEF_Feb_21_07.pdf) and then I replayed the 2011 legislative hearings on CT-N for the last two months and became increasingly concerned regarding the déjà vu conversations across the legislative hearings that sound similar to the last several years of hearings that clearly stated for the record that “The state must reform its education system to ensure that Connecticut’s children can successfully compete in the 21st century global economy [local] and become active, informed contributors to our democratic institutions. The Governor [Jodi M. Rell], legislature, local businesses, and parents know that under-investing in the public schools is simply unacceptable for preparing children for an increasingly knowledge-based economy and multicultural society.

In closing, every public school parent should be able, to demand that their child have access to an effective public school. This includes ensuring teachers effectiveness is the only basis for hiring and keeping a teacher the classroom. We must support ALL effective teachers and recruit great school leaders to ensure teachers are properly evaluated and supported to ensure better outcomes for children.

I respectfully urge the members of the appropriation committee to ensure children have access to the necessary educational reform efforts needed to raise their academic achievement and reduce the gap, especially for vulnerable populations of children.

Let me be very clear, I fully understand you face tough choices because your appropriation committee decisions have a direct correlation to the economic viability of our state. The CGA Commerce Committee stated there are five areas to address to help stabilize CT.

- *EDUCATION – the driver of a qualified workforce
- *Cost of Doing Business in CT
- *Housing – ensuring there is sufficient affordable housing to support job growth
- *Transportation - Supporting efficient Commuter efforts
- *Energy cost

I think we can all agree that closing our achievement gap and giving all students a great start through their education is important not only for children, but to ensure we reduce this budget deficit by stabilizing for Connecticut's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.
Sincerely,
Gwen Samuel

