

Kanicka Ingram

Senate Bill 24 Testimony

February 22, 2012

Greetings Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kanicka Ingram and I fully support Senate Bill 24 as it takes bold and radical first steps toward Accountability, Equity, and Access in an effort to close Connecticut's worst in the nation achievement gap. As a parent of a 3-year-old son, resident of New Haven, Director of Multicultural Recruitment at Quinnipiac University and the Education Chair of the Greater New Haven NAACP I can honestly say that I have a unique stake in education.

As an employee of arguably one of the strongest academic institutions in the country, I see first hand the results of Connecticut's achievement gap. My primary role is to ensure that the institution enrolls an academically sound and diverse class every year. I'm impressed every time I visit different high schools throughout the country and see such amazing talent coming from low-income communities of color. There are school models out there that work and communities truly come together to produce great results for kids. I sadly don't see the same levels of black, Latino and low-income achievement produced in this state. We need to start producing more home grown talent to take advantage of the opportunities at the colleges and universities in our backyard.

In my capacity in the Greater New Haven NAACP, I speak with many parents who want better options for their children and more accountability from the district and the state. The notion that parents don't care or deny that they have a responsibility in their children's education is ridiculous. Parents want to see their children succeed and that want to collaborate with teachers, principals, and lawmakers to make the changes needed to provide a world-class education for every student in Connecticut regardless of where they live or the color of their skin.

Senate Bill 24 explicitly explains that we have a problem and haven't yet made good on the need to make sure all students have access to great schools, and it also proclaims that "Connecticut is going to go to great lengths to address and correct this problem". Although not perfect, this bill places ACCOUNTABILITY not only on teachers but also administration. We know that great teachers and principals can change students' lives forever. While the Governor's proposal will provide much needed additional funding to areas with the highest levels of student need, additional steps must be taken to ensure true EQUITY for all students. We've said time and time again that the Education Cost Sharing formula is broken, yet the bill does nothing to fix it. We need to move towards a student-based funding formula that adequately accounts for town revenue ability and student need.

My top priority for testifying today is to make sure that I advocate for the children of Connecticut, especially the New Haven residents. My son, like many other students, will embark on his educational journey next fall. I, like many other parents, would like to make school choice a true reality for him and we have enrolled him in charter and magnet school lotteries. As parents, my husband and I can't knowingly enroll our child in a failing school, but that is a reality in New Haven and other urban districts. Some urban parents have to wake up everyday knowing that they send their child to a school that can't guarantee his success. They also know that if they could afford to live in a different town, their child would have drastically better educational options. I hope that you have the courage today to change this. The Governor's proposal isn't the going to get all of this done, but it's a great first step. Please pass Senate Bill 24.