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Testimony on Senate Bill 24
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Charwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 24. My name is Lauren Wozniak and I am the Operations and Projects Manager for Excel Bridgeport, an education advocacy nonprofit organization. I am also a former teacher. I taught 7th and 8th grade science at Paul Laurence Dunbar School in the East End of Bridgeport for two years. My experiences as a teacher and my work as an advocate for improved education for all of Bridgeport's children solidify my support for this important bill.

Even though I am no longer in the classroom, I think of my students everyday. I think about how unfair it is that they are not prepared for success in college or a career. I think about how they are so far behind their wealthier peers one town over. I worry about where they will be in ten years. Simply because they live in Bridgeport, my former students are not receiving an excellent education and it is infuriating.

S.B. 24 provides an opportunity to address the issue of chronically failing and underperforming schools. As a teacher in one of the district's lowest performing schools I found it frustrating that we did not receive adequate support or intervention for improving educational outcomes for our students. I am encouraged that this bill calls for strong intervention in schools and districts where it is most needed and provides funding increases for schools that adopt reforms that will improve student achievement. I am also encouraged that S.B. 24 aims to ensure that the highest-needs students are provided with the most talented teachers and school leaders. It is imperative that there is a great teacher in every classroom and an excellent principal in every school and it is essential that these leaders are retained and rewarded for being exceptional educators.

We have waited too long to implement any bold reforms that might improve public education. There are 20,000 students in the Bridgeport Public School System and every year we wait to do something, those 20,000 kids get farther and farther behind. The time is now to work toward improving education for our kids and S.B. 24 is a step in the right direction.