

**Appropriations Education Budget Public Hearing 2/21**

**Public Testimony**

**By: Maria Zambrano**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Maria Zambrano and I am speaking today in support of Governor Dannel P. Malloy's education budget proposals. I am a resident and homeowner in Bridgeport, the lowest-performing school district in Connecticut. I am also a product of Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS), graduating in the top 2% of my high school class back in 2002. Despite being a top student in Bridgeport, I still landed in a remedial program in college. I spent half of my college career struggling to make up for the deficits in my K-12 public education.

I have suffered the consequences of the achievement gap in my own life.

Ten years later, I see the same problems in Bridgeport schools that I experienced as a student. Little has changed. Our schools have not improved. Recent BPS graduates are still re-living my story when they get to college. The overwhelming majority of Bridgeport students still do not have access to a high quality public education.

Last year's education reform law (Public Act 12-116) increased investments in our children, which includes raising standards for educators with a statewide educator evaluator program, and creating the Commissioner's Network, which allows for immediate action to improve failing schools.

The Commissioner's Network aims to turnaround up to 25 of Connecticut's lowest-performing schools, and help thousands of students receive the high-quality education they deserve. These Commissioner's Network schools – including Bridgeport's Curiale School – are our state's most deeply dysfunctional schools that have been failing year-after-year.

The statewide educator evaluation program will provide feedback and support to further empower high-performing teachers and principals, make certain that low-performing teachers get the help they need and allow for swift dismissal of those who consistently fail to improve.

These key reforms will help make certain that our kids are getting the best education possible.

This fall, my little niece, Andrea, will start public school in Bridgeport. Your actions today will determine the quality of the school system she will enter. Don't let her get to college and experience what her aunt experienced. Andrea is counting on you to give her the tools she needs to succeed. She is counting on your leadership. Please support the Governor's proposals.