Danielle Guillen
Student, Yale University
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My name is Danielle Guillen and I am currently a senior at Yale University majoring in history. I am a future secondary math teacher and co-president of Students for Education Reform at Yale.

Before I begin, I want to thank Chairwoman Harp, Chairwoman Walker, and the entire committee for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Where I grew up in Southern California, my parents made a critical decision for my sisters and for me. Every morning from the first day of kindergarten until the end of 5th grade, my sister Mariah and I had a set routine so my mom could get to work on time: we got up, we got ready, and we drove across town to school sometimes before the yard monitors were there.

In doing this, my parents' goal was simple: to provide my sister and me with the opportunity to attend a better elementary school outside our neighborhood school, the one my mother went to. However, for my parents, achieving this goal was challenging. From filing paperwork for our inner-district transfers to rearranging their work schedules to make sure we got to school on time every morning, the ability to access and attend my elementary school was unreasonably tricky. But despite all of the obstacles, I never realized how privileged I was.

When I arrived in New Haven and began to get involved in Connecticut's education system as a tutor, I realized that I was not only lucky to have dedicated parents but also I was fortunate enough to grow up in a region in California where my parents could choose to send me to a better school, not just the one I lived closest to. It is a sad reality that Connecticut parents, as caring and committed as my own, too often don't have the choice or the ability to get their kids into a great school.

The frustration I felt after understanding Connecticut's educational inequity drove me to advocate for an improved education system. Last year, the education reforms proposed in SB 458 inspired me, students at Yale, and students at campuses all across Connecticut to stand up and support these proposed education policies to help kids whose only misdeed was being born in the wrong zip code.

Chairwoman Harp, Chairwoman Walker, and the rest of the appropriations committee, I urge you all to fully fund the educational commitment you made to Connecticut's children last year.