

Appropriations Committee Testimony  
Public Hearing- March 22nd, 2013  
Respectfully Submitted By: Stephanie Swantek, MSW student  
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Good Morning. My name is Stephanie Swantek and I am a graduate student at the UCONN School of Social Work, focusing on the area of human rights. I am writing on behalf of raised H.B number 6621, and the programs and services that will be affected by such budget cuts.

I am speaking in part as a struggling student, working two part time jobs and attending school full time. At times I find myself burnt out, exhausted and stressed by my busy schedule, but then I remind myself that I was born with privilege and opportunity. I am white, middle class, educated, and come from a home of two working parents. I was given the opportunity of education, which was never threatened by constant budget cuts and lack of resources.

While I am a privileged young adult I still recognize poverty and the struggles of families in the state of Connecticut. I have worked hard to be where I am today, but I was also given great opportunity, a safe community, and a family that could provide me with three meals a day. I am speaking on behalf of those students who are not as blessed to have the same supportive family and resources that I was given. According to the Connecticut census (2012), 15% of children in the state live in poverty, as does 50% of Hartford's Children. According to Connecticut Voices for Children, the percent of children under age 18 in poverty increased from 10.2% to 14.9% over the past decade.

If schools continue to face the constant threat of budget cuts, it will result in: overcrowding, lack of qualified educators, staff, extracurricular programs and social services. In combination with unhealthy, decaying environments, this poverty deficit will only continue to grow. These children

and families are our future. If the state does not choose to support them and give them the opportunity to education, growth and knowledge, what does their future look like? You cannot take away from their futures. They face enough obstacles on a daily basis; their education should never be put on the line.

Education is power. It makes or breaks our future. It creates opportunity and puts the world into perspective. By pulling more and more money out of these already struggling areas, you are choosing to reinforce poverty and discrimination, gang activity, and teen pregnancy. Education is not something that can afford to be cut.

What I am asking for is that the basic human right of equal education be given to every student in the state of Connecticut. What I am proposing is that you grant every child the ability to dream about his future, so that they can confidently answer the question: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Many students find comfort and protection in their daily interactions with class mates and staff in the school system. This is where they eat the majority of the meals, feel warmth when their heat is shut off, and learn to focus on something beyond the everyday struggles going on in their neighborhood or family life.

Please remember the children directly impacted by these cuts. Please keep in mind the lives you are changing who are the faces of our future. These are not just stories, they are peoples' livelihood. They deserve to be advocated for and empowered through their education. Above all, I beg you keep the dream alive for students all across the state of Connecticut. If their own state does not support them, who will?