

Middlesex Coalition for Children

Testimony on S.B. 942: An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education, as well as supporting H.B. No. 6837 and H.B. No. 6834

My name is Izzi Greenberg and I'm the director of the Middlesex Coalition for Children, a group that works to improve outcomes for low-income children in Middlesex County. I am testifying primarily on S.B. 942, and specifically against budget cuts around family support programs.

While we very much applaud the maintenance of funding to School Readiness Councils, Care for Kids and Family Resource Centers, these programs cannot support struggling families across the state alone. Parents need supports to raise healthy children, and families who are living in poverty need them even more.

The reduction of the funding for Quality Improvement across the state's early education networks is especially troublesome. Quality is a huge factor in the achievement gap—we can't pat ourselves on the back for increasing the number of pre-school slots in the state if that's all we do—we need to work toward ensuring that those children are receiving a high quality educational experience.

Roughly 50% of the children in Middletown are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Many parents lack sufficient education for working wage jobs and many of our residents are hovering at the poverty line. Programs that support families are not luxuries.

In our town alone, we have successful Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) Programs, Help Me Grow, Family School Connection and other family-centered programs. These programs are supporting the parents who are supporting our community's children with a two-generational, holistic approach. If we lose these programs, we lose a very valuable aspect of parent/child support that is doing much good for the people in our county and across the state.

While I won't go into detail, the Coalition for Children also supports HB 6834 AN ACT CONCERNING COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS. and HB 6837 AN ACT ENCOURAGING A GRADUATED RESPONSE MODEL FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE which create better guidelines for ensuring that students are disciplined fairly and equitably through Memorandums of agreement (MOAs) between schools and police and which create a uniform definition of school arrest to promote transparency and accountability.

Arresting students from school is often ineffective and even counterproductive. In many cases, behaviors for which students are arrested could be prevented through earlier intervention or handled more effectively with school based sanctions that address the true source of misbehavior.

Many schools have implemented these policies on their own, but we need statewide implementation for success. I hope you'll support both bills.

Thank you,
Submitted by: Izzi Greenberg