

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Rep. Fleishman, Senator Winfield and all sitting legislators, My name is Sauda Efia Baraka and I am a member of the Bridgeport Board of Education for 10 years, the past board chair, parent to 5 children 4 of whom graduated from Bridgeport Public Schools and with one left, a junior. I also have 2 grandchildren in Bridgeport PS and parent leader PAC and PTSO, for almost 30 years. I am also retired from the State of CT/Judicial Dept./CSSD after serving 22 years in Adult Probation and retiring as the Chief Probation Officer managing the Bridgeport office and know what happens when we don't adequately fund our district public schools.

I am very concerned about the proliferation of charter schools in our state and specifically in Bridgeport (we have the greatest number 5) and I support State Raised Bill 1096 An Act Concerning Charter Schools -- and that a moratorium be placed on any further charter school approval, as stated in the bill: "until the Commission of Education develops a comprehensive state-wide charter school plan and conducts a review of charter schools in existence, and such plan and review are approved by the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education."

I support the moratorium, and for the record, on March 10, 2014 the Bridgeport Board of Education adopted a resolution for a moratorium on any new charter schools in Bridgeport. The resolution called for the Board to conduct an impact study related to the financial impact and review and assessment of current data on academic and socio-emotional performance of Bridgeport children attending charter schools in Bridgeport

Charter schools impact the school districts' budgets and cost us millions of dollars, dollars that we don't have. Each dollar taken from our district further burdens us. As the most underfunded district in the State of Ct, we can not afford to support charter schools and still meet the standards dictated by the State of CT. Charter schools are not required to meet the same standards required of public schools. The charter schools are bastions of segregation and can select and deselect our students at will and many of the Charter Schools do not perform as well as our district schools. They also take our best students, and research proves that higher performing students help motivate all students in a school. Over the years, I have received countless calls from parents looking asking for assistance after their children were deselected from one charter school or another; and have had to tell them that charter schools are their own district and set their own school standards and can deselect. Charter schools do not benefit our state of CT or our children.

With districts' funds being siphoned off, creating the lack of adequate funding we were forced to eliminate many of our elective courses, decrease the number of TAG programs and AP classes. Our classrooms are overcrowded, we don't have nurses in every school, our schools share social workers, psychologists and other support staff including paraprofessionals, which not only impacts our general ed students, but most specifically, it impacts our Special needs students, and we don't have adequate security staff or school police to maintain the safety of our school.

The flat funding of ECS severely impacts our children. Our children come to our schools with the greatest needs, many of our children fall below the federal/state poverty guidelines, are exposed to dysfunction, don't have preschool opportunities, and lack proper technology and support infrastructure, which further expands the digital divide, and again negatively impacting the quality of our children's educational life, all while receiving the least financial support in CT, and with money continually being siphoned from our district... negatively affecting our students. As a result, our children are prone to dropout or not graduate from our schools, which often leads to what is referred to as the school to prison pipeline. This I am most familiar with as a retired probation officer.

I'd like to provide a few statistics:

per student funding: 19K Hartford 17K New Haven 14K Bridgeport National School Counselor Standards: 1 to 300 counselors Bridgeport 1-600 National Social Worker Standards: 1 to 250 general education student; and 1:50 for SPED services Bridgeport Currently has 1.5 to 1215 SW at our largest elementary school - 1 to 600 district wide, as you can see we are well over national standards.

Bridgeport Public Schools need at least 7 million to keep the doors open and an additional 5 million to implement our academic programs with fidelity.

For instance Capital Prep Harbor Charter School is scheduled to open the 2015-16 school year will cost Bridgeport Public school's in the first 3 years approximately 3 million (2,959,462), so I ask, that this school not be funded.

I ask that you, CT legislators who are charged with the responsibility to ensure excellent public schools in our state, and you who set the educational standards and expectations, to support Bill 1096, fully fund the ECS, and properly fund our magnet schools... that we know work and exceed standards.

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight.

Sent from my iPad