

Testimony of

Andrew Martinez

Submitted to the Connecticut Appropriations Committee

February 16, 2016

Dear members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Andrew Martinez and I am the Data Coordinator of the Waterbury Bridge to Success Community Partnership (BTS). I am here today to urge you to **support line item budgeting** in order to preserve legislative power, and to encourage you to **maintain funds for the Community Plans for Early Childhood**.

BTS is a cradle to career partnership of over 200 parents, caregivers, key stakeholders, and 93 public and private organizations in Waterbury. All 93 partner organizations are working together towards a common goal to make sure Waterbury's youth succeed in school, work and life. More specifically, this partnership is working diligently to ensure that 1) children are social-emotionally ready for kindergarten, 2) have the necessary literacy skills by grade three, and 3) graduate high school on time. BTS consists of three staff members who work closely with community partners to promote these community-wide goals by developing strategies, commenting on trends, suggesting connections, and helping our community partners bring local and national private funds to Waterbury. As the Data Coordinator, and in collaboration with BTS staff, and community partners, we work to ensure that our work is informed by data, and that best practices are used to advance these community-wide goals.

I ask you to please support line item budgeting in order to preserve legislative power and to ensure transparency. Moreover, eliminating the funding for the Community Plans for Early Childhood puts some of the private funding coming into Waterbury at risk. Many funders require a partnership like BTS. Locally, strong school-community partnerships are being formed

as a result of BTS convening partners and providing coordination, and strategic planning and direction.

Leveraged funds are now at risk if the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item is eliminated – it puts over \$75K of Waterbury’s cradle to career funding in jeopardy, and almost \$2M of funding across Connecticut. BTS leverages matching funds in the amount of \$175K from 10 local private funders. This is what a public-private partnership in Waterbury means – BTS now receives over 75% of its funding from private funders. Several of our funders have indicated that they may pull their funding if the state funds disappear. BTS runs a very lean budget each year with the United Way of Greater Waterbury serving as its fiduciary. Any cuts will remove a significant amount from the very small annual budget of the \$350K that it takes to run BTS for a year. Matching private funds will disappear from Waterbury and we will be back to the days of silos and everyone doing whatever they believe is correct without the data informed quality improvement and guidance that we now provide.

I urge you to continue to budget with a line item budget, and ensure that the Community Plans for Early Childhood line item remains in the budget. It would be a shame to reduce privately matched funds that benefit Waterbury’s children because of this cut to the state budget.

Thank you for your time. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.