

Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing: Governor's Proposed Budget
Date: 2/16/16

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Daniella Giese. I am from Harwinton, and I'm a senior at Lewis S. Mills High School.

Whenever I have to give a timed speech in one of my classes, I'm always worried that I won't be able to find enough to say about the topic to fill the allotted time. But when it comes to talking about the CRILA program, I could probably go on for three hours, let alone three minutes. CRILA is an interdistrict grant program that has been running for twelve years. It brings 30 students together each year to learn and grow together and to practice leadership.

I've never liked public speaking. I always get really nervous. But one of the things I've learned from CRILA is to have confidence in myself and my abilities. I've also learned how to better communicate with people when it comes to solving a problem—for example, talking face-to-face instead of reading from a paper.

During the week in Colorado, we had to complete several activities that were specifically designed to push us outside of our comfort zones. Standing on a tightrope eighty feet above the ground was definitely out of my comfort zone. I was terrified the entire time I was on that high ropes course...except when I got to the last part, the river crossing. Instead of feeling scared, I felt peaceful. Relaxed even. It was a moment that I know I'm going to remember for the rest of my life. Another thing that helped me face the terror I felt was being partnered with another student named Gabby. She radiated positivity the whole time. Her confidence gave me confidence. I didn't know her well when we started our week in Colorado, but now I know we're going to be lifelong friends. I can honestly say that for every student in CRILA 12. I might not have known any of them before this program, but now I'd trust them to hold my life in their hands; which a few of them literally did when we went rock climbing. We have a CRILA group chat that we talk on every day (literally every day) and they constantly make me laugh. And I never would've met them if not for this program.

Every activity they had us do in Colorado had an impact on me, and every member of CRILA has had an impact on me as well.

Our class was very saddened to hear that CRILA would not continue next year because the funding was removed by the State Department of Education. CRILA has helped hundreds of students like me make friends, grow their leadership skills, and find their voice. I am here today, with my CRILA classmates to ask for your support. Please continue to fund this important program. The cost is about \$80,000 per year, but the results are worth much more than that.

Thank you for your time and support.