Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee
Public Hearing re: HB 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNe THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

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Good afternoon distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Haddiyyah Ali and I am an AmeriCorps member with The Governor's Prevention Partnership's EdCorpsCT program. I reside in Bloomfield, CT in Rep. Gibson's as well as Senator McCrory's district.

I am here in support of maximum funding for The Governor's Prevention Partnership. Really, though, I am here in support of my mentees and their classmates building positive relationships, getting classroom support, and being empowered to make positive choices every day.

The Partnership works to help kids all over the state with programs to prevent underage drinking and substance abuse, reduce bullying in schools and communities, and connect kids to mentors. Three years ago, The Partnership applied to the Connecticut Commission on Community Service to form EdCorpsCT. Our program, modeled after City Year, targets the achievement gap by targeting chronic absenteeism.

In the very first year of the program, 2/3 of the kids we worked with improved their grades in language arts and math. Overall, the school that participated in our intervention showed a 9% decrease in chronic absenteeism, which the principal credits to our work. Right now, our program is housed at one school as well as their after school program, however, we would like to see it expand to schools with chronic absenteeism issues across the state.

Day to day, our intervention works with 100 children at Fred D. Wish Museum School from the moment the doors open until the last student leaves the building. It is between those moments; from breakfast to sign out, that the magic happens.

My task as a mentor is to give these students something to look forward to when they walk through those doors every day. I along with the other mentors are an integral part of each of our mentee's day. We walk them through multiplication problems and read their favorite books. We learn how to make slime, plan spirit weeks, and program for Black History Month. We do these things because we know that 1 in 3 young people will grow up without a mentor, and that is 1 less young person that is seeing the change we hope they will be.

Sometimes my students call me Miss Haddiyyah. More often than that, however, they call me auntie, big sister, and friend. The relationships that I build with them mean that they are honest with me about the barriers
facing them before they make it to the school building. One of my students has been in therapy for four months because I was able to act as a bridge between their family and the Village. My parents know to expect a call when their child is not at school. Sometimes the kids joke about Auntie Haddiyyah showing up to your house if no one answers her letters or calls.

There are, of course, still tough days. When my students are their most frustrated, and feel as though no one has their back, they turn to me and I ask them to do their part by showing up and letting us take it from there. I know that even the most sophisticated reform plans and investments into educational reform will not work if students aren’t in their seats. I hope you all will continue your support of them through your investment in The Governor’s Prevention Partnership. Thank you for your time.