

CHAIRPERSON: Representative Toni E.
Walker

SENATORS: Osten, Formica, Abrams,
Kushner, Winfield

REPRESENTATIVES: Abercrombie, Baker,
Dathan, Felipe, Gibson,
Gilcrest, Johnson,
Kokoruda, McCarty, Porter,
Reyes, Rosario, Tercyak,
Wilson

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good afternoon, everybody. Good
Afternoon, everybody. Hello! Over here, over here.
Thank you. Feel free to go out into the hallways to
continue your conversations, just in here we just
ask everybody to be respectful of the people that
are testifying.

Good afternoon. Today we are doing the Public
Hearing on, wow, what are we doing? We are doing it
on Education, and I think we've got a few others in
there to. Oh, good. This is all today? Hum.
Education, Early Childhood, State Library, Teacher's
Retirement, Governor's Office, Lieutenant Governor,
State Secretary, Department of Banking, Office of
Government Accountability, State Elections
Enforcement Commissions, State Office of State
Ethics, Freedom of Information Commission, Office of
Child Advocate, Office of Victim Advocate, Board of
Firearms Permit Examiners Contract and Standards
Board, Judicial Selection Commission, Judicial
Review Council, Legislative Management, Auditors of
Public Accountants and the Commission on Women,
Children and Seniors and Equity. Is that enough for

everybody today? Wow, that's a mouthful. Anyhow, those are the agencies that we are hearing testimony from and those are the Budget and some of you may come different budget items there so do not feel concerned, I am sure whatever testimony you provide with us today we will definitely retain and apply to the appropriate area if it is not exactly here. So I also remind everybody that when they step up to the microphone please state your name clearly. The reason why we ask that is because CTN, while you are talking, will type your name in so that your name is under your image on the screen so people will know where you are from and who you are testifying about.

Also we have a buzzer. Could you please give everybody a sound of the buzzer so that they know? The reason why we have that buzzer is to appropriately let people have the three minutes to present their discussion or whatever they are reading, if at any point in time the buzzer goes off and you are still reading I will give you a minute but its really requires that everybody try and be as aware as possible. We will provide a variety of gesturers so that people will know, if we have to we will go the jazz hands so that people will know that the time limit is up but we want everybody to be able to be aware of where, what the timing is.

So with that, I am going to call up, and we have the ability since there are several people here from different agencies or different organizations but we offer is an opportunity for all of them to come up, sometimes you need the support, sometimes they just like to be there with the other person while they are testifying. What we will do is we will give you an extra, if it's like two, or three or four people

we will give you a couple of extra minutes but I ask you not to read your testimony just give us a quick summary so that we don't end up extending more hours so that other people don't have to wait longer periods of time. So with that, I am going to start with the American School for the Deaf. There are three people here to testify and I want to know if they would like to all come up together, Jeff Bravin, Joshua Robinson, and Chad Williams. Would they all like to come together or Jeff would you like to be the one that comes? Is it on?

JEFF BRAVIN (Interpreter): Good Afternoon, I am here alone for the moment because we have a student that was dropped off at the wrong building, they're over at the Capital Building so I have my staff member running over to get the student and bring them here[Laughing] so they will be here very shortly.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You know what, they can go right to the Governor's Office and testify over there if they would like, okay? [Laughter]

JEFF BRAVIN (Interpreter): I agree, they should.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Tell 'em the Appropriations Committee sent him over there [Laughter]. That 'il educate him. [Laughter]

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes, it would. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to testify today. And as I have met with some of you earlier and been able to have conversations about our budget, I want to thank each of you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Excuse me, could you ask him to state his name again, please?

JEFF BRAVIN: (Testimony through interpreter) Oh sure, my name is Jeffery Bravin, I am the Executive Director at the American School for the Deaf. I would like to thank all of you legislators for your hard work in increasing our appropriations last year. There was a \$500,000 dollar increase to our appropriations. However, we found out that we were hit with holdbacks of \$425,000 dollars last year so the increase was only \$75,000 dollars for our school, not to mention since 2012 the Governors or the State have cut our funds by \$2.7 million dollars from our appropriations so we are now running in a budget of almost \$2.8 million dollars in a deficit and if those cuts would not have happened, we would have been in a very good position this year and moving forward. But because of the impact to our appropriations it has had a huge impact on our operations. You probably will hear the student that is going to testify today about how they are losing a counselor that could guide them into a wonderful life and really help them moving forward so it's important that we have the appropriate staff and teachers for our students but all of the other supports that our students need are absolutely vital.

As you know, the students are placed in our school because of their communication and language needs and we provide a visual language. We also provide access to a spoken English class that we've opened up this year because we had a demand from children and parents who wanted that kind of an approach. So we have a listening and spoken English approach

classroom at this point. However, we don't have all of the supports in place that we need and it is difficult for those students to truly thrive in the environment as they need to. So I am asking the Legislature, I am going to be very brief today, basically the Governor is proposing another \$200,000 dollars in cuts and I am asking you to please not allow those cuts to happen but instead to restore the funding and not allow any holdbacks to impact our school and our program because as we plan for our budget we are hit with holdbacks and it makes it very difficult to make adjustments throughout the year. So thank you again for all of your continued support and I know you will do wonderful things for the American School for the Deaf. So thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Jeff, Jeff, Jeff. [Laughter] Oh, I have the student here. You found your way here, great. Before you go anywhere I just want to clarify the cut, the cut that you got, we gave you the \$500 and I think \$23,000 dollars last year.

JEFF BRAVIN: Yeah, \$523,000 dollars correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And what was released by OPM was \$75,000 dollars of that \$523,000 dollars is that correct?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yep. Correct, that's correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): So therefore the will of the Legislature was not carried forward in your budget, correct?

JEFF BRAVIN: That is correct.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, don't go anywhere. Let me just ask if anybody has any questions. Does anybody have any questions for American School for the Deaf? Anybody have any questions? Yes, Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good afternoon, thank you all for being here, it's good to see you. Just wondered whether you were, had you planned in your own budget for the appropriation as it stood before this proposed cut?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes, we did.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So this is actually forcing you to change decisions that you actually made?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes, that is correct. We actually had to freeze our hiring opportunities and we had to reassign people and give more duties to existing staff and all of that could have been avoided with the funds, correct.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So were you in anyway placed in a situation where for instance if you hired somebody and you were committed to the salary and so on and then you discovered you couldn't afford it, somethings that are hard to go back on?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes and no. We are at the point where we were starting to prepare for hiring in the fall and then we heard about the holdbacks so we've frozen the hiring process and made adjustments as needed but we were unable to hire an ASL and English Specialist who was able to provide our students with the appropriate language supports that they need, a

reading specialist, a guidance counselor those are all the positions that we've had to freeze and hold off on and that has tremendous impact on our students.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Are you having any increase in enrollment or any change?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes, we are. This year has been a very good year for our school. Our enrollment has grown from 128 to 150 students and our outreach services are growing also. So we have more of a reach to more students so we continue to do very well and whenever we're asked, it is hard for me to say no. I will do whatever I can to serve all deaf and hard of hearing students here in the State of Connecticut.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you. I think that is useful for us to have so the more you can give us the better. Thank you very much.

JEFF BRAVIN: And I also forgot to mention that on the third page of my submitted testimony that is online, is the budget graft and all the information so you can refer to that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wait, wait, wait.

JEFF BRAVIN: I thought I was done.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You are so quick to leave.

JEFF BRAVIN: I'm happy to stay all day [Laughter].

REP. WALKER (93RD): Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly to follow up on that. So the money that you weren't getting the full complement of, that was monies that you needed based on what your numbers were before the growth I would assume, correct?

JEFF BRAVIN: Yes that is correct.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you are there any other questions? [Laughter] Now you're done.

JEFF BRAVIN: Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, sir. Joshua. Oh, I'm sorry.

JEFF BRAVIN: (Interpreter) Joshua wasn't able to be here today he is away at a basketball game so I have Jarmal who will be speaking for Joshua.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Tell Joshua since he is not here, he'd better win this basketball game [Laughter].

JEFF BRAVIN: (Interpreter) I will, thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): So, sir please state your name and then tell us your testimony. Go right ahead.

JARMAL PURYEAR: (Through interpreter) Hello, my name is Jarmal Puryear. Good afternoon, everyone. And I am sorry that I am not able to share my

testimony in person however I wanted to respond to your continued financial support for the American School for the Deaf and I want to let you know that ASD continues to need your support so that we can continue to transition from school into the real world successfully. State funds really support our enrollment and increasing our knowledge so that we can be successful throughout our lives. The state funding really does support our transition services and our transition staff who work very closely with all of us students to plan for lives after graduation. Additionally as a senior I would be very uncertain of my future plans and what my life would look like after graduation however, I know I am able to pursue my dream and I am able to be mindful about accessibility needs that I will have after graduation out in the world of work and I will know how to advocate for all of my rights throughout my life. Students need to be taught about all of the resources that are available to us so that we can pursue our futures and successful lives whether we need interpreters or other needs of accessibility. I just want to thank you all for supporting the American School for the Deaf that provides us with all these resources and I hope that you will continue to support us.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you so much for your, don't go anywhere. No, no, no [Laughter]. All these wonderful legislators have a question or two to ask you so don't move yet. First of all, could you, I didn't get his first and last name clearly for us please.

JARMAL PURYEAR: Jarmal, J-a-r-m-a-l. My last name is Puryear, P-u-r-y-e-a-r.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): Wonderful, very nice. Thank you. So you are a senior at ASD?

JARMAL PURYEAR: Yes, that is correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Where do you reside? Where do you live, what town do you live in?

JARMAL PURYEAR: I am from the Town of Meriden.

REP. WALKER (93RD): From Meriden. How long have you been going to ASD?

JARMAL PURYEAR: Oh, 13-14, 13 years now.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wow, okay. So this, so you are planning to go to college after this?

JARMAL PURYEAR: Yes I do. I actually plan to go to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf - NTID.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Awesome, awesome. So in your classrooms you have a lot of different students from all over the State, am I correct on that?

JARMAL PURYEAR: Yes.

REP. WALKER (93RD): How many students are in your classroom right now currently? Just give me one class.

JARMAL PURYEAR: So I have seven classes but I'm in a different program right now, I'm called, in a program called The Transition Program and so we do a lot of work around planning for our future and so we

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do things about planning for finances, for working and so it is a special program that I am in to help me plan for my future.

REP. WALKER (93RD): So it's kind of like a liberal arts, Introduction to Liberal Arts School. Good. All right, thank you. Now let me ask my colleagues if they have any questions. Are there any questions for the young, for Jarmal? Are there any questions? You answered everybody question perfectly. Thank you so much for your testimony. Good job.

JARMAL PURYEAR: Thank you. Thank you so much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Let me just ask one more person, is Chad Williams here?

CHAD WILLIAMS(Through interpreter): Hello.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good afternoon. Could you state your name for us clearly for us please?

CHAD WILLIAMS: My name is Chad Williams.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, go right ahead.

CHAD WILLIAMS: So I came to the American School for the Deaf when I was 11 years old from a mainstream public school. Being in a public school was a struggle for me, extremely isolating. ASD truly helped me grow as a person and I was able to learn more and socialize with so many other peers that we like myself. ASD also prepared me well for life. I graduated in 2004 and I went to college at the Rochester Institute of Technology. I received my Associates Degree in accounting in 2012 and I have a

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Bachelor's in Applied Arts and Sciences in 2014
Right now I am working towards my master's degree at St. Joe's University and I will be graduating with a degree in Deaf Education. I feel that ASD has the power to ensure that all deaf children in the State of Connecticut receive proper education and socialization with their peers. Growing up as a deaf student I realized that being surrounded by my peers that are like me and also deaf, really made a tremendous impact on my life, my confidence and my belief in myself. So I came back to ASD to teach because I realized that I wanted to apply what I had learned growing up there to help other children succeed. ASD bring so many benefits that other schools don't provide. With the bilingual approach ASD provides full communication access within the classrooms, the dorms and especially within the student health center and that is extremely important because everybody needs to know what is going on. Being one of only a few deaf children in a mainstream school makes you feel very different. If you are a deaf child and you are placed with deaf peers that deaf child no longer feels isolated or excluded. Activities such as sporting events, education and most importantly friendship are not accessible.

In the working environment I am able to work with children that are deaf like me. As a deaf person with a successful career I feel that I am a role model for my deaf students. And one of the main reasons why I chose to be a teacher of the deaf was to educate and give full communication access to my students and I do this every day. I know from my experience in the public school setting that deaf students risk being singled out in every way

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possible. I don't want to see that happen to any deaf children in the State of Connecticut and the American School for the Deaf thrives on educating deaf and hard of hearing students. It is so important to keep the appropriation level funded for the American School for the Deaf because cutting funds to ASD will continue to hurt our student's education and their future. And I am making a promise to you today that as long as ASD is open and running that I will retire from the school because it means so much to me and it will forever mean so much to the current students and teachers of ASD. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Are there any questions from anybody today? Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you very much. Next we have Sheri.

JEFF BRAVIN: I'm sorry, this is Jeff. I want to let you know we have one parent who says they would be arriving at five but she is here now, if she could testify.

REP. WALKER (93RD): That would be Sheri, correct?

JEFF BRAVIN: Correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And she is sitting right there, yeah. He's managing. Representative Abercrombie let me know that you are here. Go right ahead. Why don't we just pass it around that would be better cause then I can see you, cause if she puts it up there then I can't see you.

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SHERI ROMBLAD: I would love that. That is actually a picture of our robotics team at ASD, they just had a competition and they are going to a State Finals competition. So I just wanted you to see the team that we are so proud of.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Congratulations. Go right ahead.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Thank you. So Appropriations Committee Members, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Governors Proposed Fiscal Year 21 Budget, 20-21 Budget Adjustments and why it is critical to maintain the current State funding or possibly add to those State fundings for the American School for the Deaf . This funding has historically enhanced ASD's effective programming, serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing student population across Connecticut and it is imperative that this funding remain in order to continue that success.

ASD has been a source of support, education and hope, not only for my child, but also for our whole family since we arrived in 2015. The journey to get to ASD was paved in public educational failure and emotional turmoil. However, with the support of ASD's highly trained as you can see, highly trained and skilled staff, their rich history in the development of deaf education, our son and our family feel that the future is looking very bright. Sorry. My child is well cared for emotionally and academically at that school. There are times when my husband and I feel that ASD has been the foster care educational system for our child. And before entering the ASD their program, our family's

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confidence and trust with educators was so badly damaged, we were hesitant that this approach, their approach to learning wasn't going to have any significant impact but then we quickly realized that the interventions we received not only allowed our child to become well-adjusted academically and emotional, but it also helped the whole family.

So as we speak today our son is working with his team to go above and beyond those educational benchmarks that the State puts before us. He just wants to surpass them. We value and credit the work that ASD does to encourage and support to self-empowerment that they give to these students on a daily basis.

As a parent, I have become actively involved with Representative Abercrombie and Representative Kokoruda could testify to that. I have actively been involved with ASD and the community. I have experienced firsthand how ASD unequivocally gives back to the deaf community as well as the State of Connecticut with their knowledge and resources. Connecticut has shared this history of supporting the deaf and hard of hearing community through ASD programs and resources offered there. They are helping just not those students; you have to understand their impact is statewide. It's big and it doesn't even stem from there. They are considered the mothership of all deaf education. I mean it is something to be so proud of. So supporting them financially just makes sense. So if we continue to cut support to this educational program then we cut the necessary support to the children, families and professionals they serve. We will be sorry; I forgot my glasses. Thank you.

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[Laughter] I can see.

REP. WALKER (93RD): We are in the Legislative Office Building, welcome.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Fantastic. For example ASD has a robotic team that I shared with you and they are a tough contender in that competition. They are an all deaf team. I mean they are setting standards for the rest of the nation in that category. Our students, and I want to note this because I have been a Judge in the past and I was recently a Judge but I want you to take note there is a philosophy that First Robotics has that's called Gracious Professionalism and it is a philosophy that all should be sharing with each other and when I was in the room with the judges and they come back from their field interviews and their other interviews and they are looking at their designs of their robots they said, hands down, compared to all the 15 teams that are competing ASD's gracious professionalism is unsurpassable. I mean that is, those are people that are going to be going into the world and understanding, you know, how to work with very different perspectives.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you.

SHERI ROMBLAD: So I just want, I really just want you to consider the robotics program is rigorous and demanding for all the students and the coach. It is probably the most favorite class among the students and it is these type of programs that tend to see the harsh realities of funding support when funding support gets taken away. Those are the types of programs that we lose, those are the types of things

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that students really gain real life experience from. So please consider when you are looking at those lines in the budget who is on the other end of that line because you may be cutting the next CEO to a Connecticut windfarm factory or a windfarm. You could be cutting an engineer to Electric Boat or you could be cutting a head chef at the next five start restaurant. I mean there is so many values that come out of that program. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you so much for your testimony. So you are a parent, a very proud parent.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Yes, I am.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And you have seen the number of students that are, that come to ASD and if this institution had to be reduced the impact would be traumatic for not just one community but multiple communities.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Multiple communities, multiple lives. It impacts lives so there is multiple lives at stake.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I think the most important though is there are lives at stake but there are people from all over the State, its not just one area cause I think a lot of people seem to think that the School for the Deaf is only in the West Hartford Area but they take students, that's why I asked the young man where he was from so that we demonstrate that this is a statewide school that is the only one of it's kind.

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SHERI ROMBLAD: So it is the only one of its kind and just to give you an idea, my child comminutes from Madison every day. So that is a sacrifice that he makes every day but he knows and we talk about this constantly. He knows that he is in the right place. We always check in with him to ask him do you feel that you are getting, you know, are you feeling that you are in the right place in life and he always says, he's like, "I think about that often and this is the best program for me right now, this is the best program." And I just think the product that, the amount of effort that goes into their product, cause their product is that student, really is an amazing, it is an amazing process to watch and I've seen it with my own child starting in sixth grade. IT is amazing.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for coming in and sharing your story and your family with us and thank you for coming for your testimony for ASD. Representative, now a minute ago I asked and nobody raised their hands. No, no, no [Laughter]. Thank you Representative Kokoruda, go right ahead.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all, Sheri Romblad I want to thank you for being here. I knew you would be; I didn't even have to look at the list. You know Sheri is a constituent and what is pretty remarkable, her story, here she. I'm surprised she didn't show up with an 8x10 picture of her son Lucas tonight because that is what she usually does but Lucas was in the schools in Madison which I'm pretty proud of our schools and we do a great job and he was getting special education services and all the time he was deaf and

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they didn't know it or profoundly, you know, had a hearing impaired for sure, and it wasn't until he was in third grade and here is a mom who fought for everything. have we heard that story here before, fought for everything and now she fights for every child and I know Lucas is now a sophomore?

SHERI ROMBLAD: He is a sophomore.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): A sophomore in high school and with so many things way ahead of him and when I see him, run into him, he is doing so many, all the things that kids his age should be doing and I think of where he was in third grade and if a young boy can slip through the cracks in a town that has resources can you imagine how many of our kids are slipping through the cracks and everyone doesn't have a Sheri Romblad. So thank you for being here Sheri. Sheri's worked with us on some procedures with pediatricians and with school nurses and she has really made a difference. Keep advocating, you're doing a great job.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and you know the takeaway from what Representative Kokoruda really said and that was there are so many parents out there that are lost in where they can get their services and we categorized children so that they fit in a box but we don't actually look at the children to see where they belong. So thank you very much for being an advocate and showing and demonstrating. So I hope you're going to do that with other parents. Okay, Representative. What makes you think I'm gonna call you? Representative

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Abercrombie [Laughter].

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): I just wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you to Sheri. Not only does Sheri advocate and come to all of these meetings but she is also on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired Advisory Counsel and she comes to all of those meetings and she has just been a tremendous, tremendous asset. So thank you very much and thank you for taking time out of her family to be here tonight. We really do appreciate it; it makes a difference.

SHERI ROMBLAD: Oh, thank you. Thank you so much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Did I see another hand?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you for being here and testifying. I did have the privilege last year to attend a graduation because one of the students from Danbury graduated last year and it was an amazing experience to witness the students and how they demonstrated the skills in intelligence and, you know, everything they had learned in attending the American School for the Deaf and I did want to Representative Walker's point, I do want to point out that this is something that affects students all over this State and I would ask you, do you, I would assume that in funding the school we are not just opening education to the students but we are also making an investment in the future in the State of Connecticut because of the skills that people graduate with and the ability to really excel in the community.

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SHERI ROMBLAD: That is exactly my point, yes, exactly.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I also want to thank you for being here and also the Executive Director of an amazing place.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, are there any other comments or anything? No. Thank you. Thank you everybody, have a good evening. Okay, now we go to the remainder of the list. We have Brian Corvo from CBIA and Peter Gioa from CBIA. I didn't recognize you, sir with your beard. I haven't seen you with a beard before. Welcome. Don't forget you must state your name before you speak. Go ahead.

BRIAN CORVO: Absolutely, thank you. I am Brian Corvo, Assistant Council for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, CBIA, and this is Pete Gioa.

PETE GIOA: Economic Advisor to CBIA, good to see you again.

BRIAN CORVO: CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization with thousands of member companies small and large representing a diverse range of industries. Ninety-five percent of our members are small businesses with less than 100 employees.

Connecticut has made modest initial steps towards short-term fiscal stability and job growth. However, the State's long-term prospects are less certain. Connecticut has opportunities to accelerate its progress on a trajectory aimed a fiscal sustainability, economic expansion and job

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growth. The legislature can and should take action on such opportunities and make the kinds of fundamental changes necessary for bright economic future for the State and prosperity and jobs for its people. A critical element to this is restoring the confidence of the State's business community and employers that the State is committed to its own fiscal stability and to creating a good environment for economic expansion and job growth.

CBIA commends the Governor and Legislature for taking initial steps to increase efficiencies in government operations and for recently enacting bipartisan spending and borrowing reforms. Both demonstrate a more disciplined approach to state finances. But there is still important work to be done and recommends that the Legislature explore and pursue the following opportunities.

The anticipated retirement of 15,000 state employees by the end of 2022 is an opportunity to make the kinds of fundamental changes that will have positive long-term impacts for state fiscal sustainability. This is an opportunity to continue to consolidate, streamline and modernize government functions with technology, expand the use of cost effective private sector businesses to provide services, support and use nonprofit providers to deliver social services and reduce state employee overtime costs. CBIA also recommends accelerating prison reform initiatives for nonviolent offenders and supporting reentry programs to help people succeed in the community and further the use of home care in lieu of nursing home placements.

CBIA encourages you to use the recent successes the

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State government has shown as a starting point for the future Connecticut deserves. CBIA welcomes discussion on other thoughtful strategies and actions that will promote a strong State economy. Thank you.

PETE GIOA: You folks have got the toughest job in the Legislature. The Governor has given you a plan and we think that there can be significant adjustments to that plan and what that will allow you to do is to find the money that folks were coming up to you this week as we say with ASD to take care of their needs and hopefully to produce some tax adjustments that would be positive for all the citizens and businesses in Connecticut. I can't overestimate the fact that we're gonna have all these retirements and what has happened to date has been the status replace people one-for-one. There is an enormous amount that can be done with automation or outsourcings such as to the private providers to reduce the number of people who are rehired. That can have a significant impact on your cost structure.

Prison reform as we have talked to you before, there is a potential for \$200-\$300 million in savings over a five year period with good programs and it's the right thing to do morally and it helps people and saves lives. In the homecare area we know people want homecare instead of nursing home care. Some of them need nursing home care and they should get it, but for the others it is about half the cost to provide them with home care and surveys such as those that have been done by UConn say that people overwhelmingly prefer that. So why should we spend more money giving people what they don't want when

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we can spend less money and give them what they do want? So I think in these areas there is an enormous opportunity for you folks to craft an adjusted budget that comes in at a lower level and also ultimately helps people and does not take away services from anybody who needs it and indeed may provide you with some funds to take care of some other service needs such as we heard earlier today that you probably should do. So, you know, we will be willing to meet and work with any of you who want any more information on this. We would be glad to help you on this and we wish you the best of luck in what is we know is an incredibly difficult job and we thank you for your service.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, sir and thank you both for your testimony. Are there questions or comments?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon gentlemen. Thank you for your good work. I have your testimony in front, it talks a little bit about some of the things that you indicate are foundational changes and you mention tax adjustments and tell me if you could, how those relate to efficiency programs that would be foundational?

PETE GIOA: Well, you know, let's talk about efficiency for a minute with state overtime. State spends over \$250 million dollars a year on overtime. Obviously that overtime exists because there are needs and you want the State to be safe. But perhaps through adjustments in staffing in areas like corrections and public safety and care for individuals, you could have perhaps some more staff

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in those areas and reduce the overtime because one of the problems with overtime is not just the effect that it has on the budget during the current fiscal year but it also has effects of pensions that are more expensive in the long-term and that has been an enormous problem for the State. So that is just one area.

Accelerating the prison reform initiatives, it costs about \$15,000 dollars a year to incarcerate someone in the State and certainly there are a lot of dangerous people who need to be incarcerated but there are other people who are less dangerous who, if given the opportunity with a good reentry program will not become recidivist, will actually perhaps take care of a family or a child that they weren't able to when they were in prison that can become a productive citizen and that is something we should make an effort to do. When I was working with the Connecticut Institute for the 21st Century we thought over a five year period for investment of \$100 million in better reentry services you could save \$300 million in prison costs. So that is somethin to look at.

Homecare, you know, going to 75 percent is something that the Legislature itself asked for and we have not achieved yet. There are other states like Oregon and Vermont that are well over 80 percent homecare and again as I mentioned with UConn survey people prefer home care. Some have such disabilities that they require nursing home care but they shouldn't be forced into nursing home care when they don't have to be. And I think that is a question that is a humane question as well as a budget question. So I hope that you folks will look

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at this budget critically, will look at areas that we can make such adjustments and create a better budget in the end that helps people more.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. So how you doin?

PETE GIOA: Good. How you doin?

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Good. Good to see you see you guys again. It is interesting the conversation that we're having because in the past that is exactly what many of us have been trying to do and in order to do it in the immediate tense, it requires that you spend more money to do those things. And there have been times when your organization has told us that is the, despite what the ultimate outcome would be, that the spending of the more money was a problem, but I don't know how you get there.

PETE GIOA: I have never said that and I've been coverin the budget for 28 years for CBIA. We need to when possible make the investments so that we get the output that we want down the road.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Can we try this? Can I finish the question?

REP. WALKER (93RD): Could you let the Legislator finish and then give him his time? Thank you.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): I'm not blaming you for anything. I am sayin that there have been times

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when the things that we have attempted to do have been explained to us to be the wrong approach. What I'm asking you is if you think is the correct approach? Regardless of what has happened in the past if you would do more than tell us that the approach would tell us how you would do it as you suggest offline that would be useful. Thank you.

PETE GIOA: Yes, send us what you think needs to be done and we will get back to ya.

BRIAN CORVO: Senator that is a discussion that we can definitely have and be open to.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Are there any other questions or comments? Yes.

REP. WILSON (66TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and Peter good to see you. I always enjoy hearing you when you are out at the Northwest Connecticut Chamber Economic Summit every year. So we met earlier with the State Contracting Board folks and as I said to them this afternoon, it's like Déjà vu. I listened last year and everything they had to say made sense and I'm just wondering if CBIA has looked at their reports or followed the minutes of their meetings, could you opine on their words?

BRIAN CORVO: We will definitely take a look at that.

REP. WILSON (66TH): Thank you very much.

BRIAN CORVO: And get back to ya.

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REP. WILSON (66TH): Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Are there any other questions for the first time. Okay for the second time, Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you. Thank you very much. I saw Senator Winfield was dying to have his question done so I wanted to make sure we did it, but I have one followup question I was going to ask. With regard to prison reform you talked about. I put in a request for a Bill this year that would offer a pilot opportunity for low level offenders to come out, get involved in a manufacturing opportunity and do something like that. Would the CBA, CBIA be interested in participating in something like that perhaps on an advisory level?

BRIAN CORVO: Sure, we have done stuff like that in the past and that is a really good idea.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other questions or comments? Thank you for your testimony. And before you go, I want to just talk about for a minute you were saying that we have an opportunity to save money by allowing the 15,000 employees to retire. I wasn't able to hear what Senator Winfield was asking or I did hear some but when you talk about the overtime report do you not think that the overtime report is going up because of the fact that we have less people to provide us with the services that we need in our agencies?

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PETE GIOA: That may be the case and if it is, hire more people. And I mean you probably never thought you would hear me say that, but [Laughter] but the fact of the matter is overtime bites us twice.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Absolutely.

PETE GIOA: Bites us when we get it and it bites us in the pension. So if we can bring on people who may, on straight time, who can eliminate overtime we should really look at that and ask OFA and OPM to give us solid cost estimates on that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I'll just give it to you from a Legislators perspective. When we start to do the budget we actually call the agencies or we call Office of Fiscal Analysis to get data so that we can make informed decisions as opposed to making guesses to get details. We asked our State Department of Education for some details on how many local educational associations are there that have overspent their budget because we want to evaluate that and we also asked them for any of the problems that you have in receiving the data that you need for them to make reports. How is that gonna work. First of all it took us about two weeks to get the answers because they have one person doing all of that. So that in itself is wrong because what it does is, I'll move my mic because the head of the Representative in front of me is right in front [Laughs] I'll mess with her. That is my little sister, I can mess with her. Anyhow, the problem we have is we cannot make informed decisions when we can't get data. We can't make, I guess projections on things we want to have happen in our state because we don't have enough staff in our agencies.

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We talked to a couple of other agencies over the last couple of days and most of their comments have been we'll try to get that information to you. So when we cut staff it has a lasting effect in a variety of ways and I agree with you about overtime. But part of the problem we have also is the way many people have vandalized, no vandalized, have villainized the way we look at state employees. And we talk to the Department of Emergency Services and they said that the State Police are having a hard time replacing State Police because nobody wants those jobs because they know that they get chastised and also because the pay is low. So we are setting ourselves up to have a very, very underfunded, under supported government agency to not serve the people by what we're doing. So we have to be very, very careful about when we talk about the 15,000 people retiring and that is going to be a benefit for the State. We are losing and we are losing badly so I appreciate the insight and I do think that you are right about the criminal justice system. We definitely have a lot of opportunities for saving there because as you know, \$600 million dollars goes for criminal justice but on \$300 million goes to higher education. We need to change that formula dramatically and we also need to expand our Office of Early Childhood so that are children get an education too.

So thank you sir and thank you for looking into those issues. I hope you listen to some of our testimonies from some of the people we have coming today and the people coming in the next couple of days because it is important to also see the people of Connecticut what they go through to survive in the State so that we all appreciate them. So thank

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you very much. And I do like the beard, I do like the beard. Thank you. Thank you both for your testimony. Have a good day. Next we have George Graham. Is George here? I'm sorry, there's a "I" there. I apologize. Remember, state your name. It's not George [Laughs].

GEORGIA GRAHAM: No, no. It happens all the time. My name is Georgia Graham. Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. I am the Senior Accounting Manager at Odyssey Community School, a public charter school in Manchester. I am here this evening to ask this Committee to restore the charter school funding cut in the Governor's budget and to provide equal funding to our state charter schools.

Charter Schools are great and they provide support and positively influence academic outcomes for students. I believe that a good education is what helps us to do our daily life activities the best way possible. It helps us to gain new skills and knowledge that impacts our journey in life. But as you know, public charter schools face a huge funding challenge. We serve a high need community of children, some are from low-income families, many are English learners (I will talk more about this later). Yet, in spite of the needs of our students, our schools do not receive equitable per-pupil funds simply because their parents chose our charter school. And now, the administration wants to balance the state budget at the expense of our children. I have balanced many budgets in my life and I know how challenging it can be. So I am here today before you to ask you not to make additional cuts when we already do not get the amount of funding we need to educate each child. When

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students attend Odyssey, we strive to support their academic success, we instill a desire to improve and persevere, and promote the internalization of our CIRCLE values. I am actually wearing one of the shirts today. Odyssey students demographic has been rapidly diversifying. In response, we have hired a certified TESOL teacher to ensure that our linguistically diverse students receive English Language support as they embark on their educational journeys. Odyssey has been highlighted in the Connecticut Charter Schools Best Practices Annual Report for our dedication to ensuring that students are promptly and properly identified as English Learners and that they also receive appropriate academic support. With equitable funding for Charter School students, we can continue to curate challenging and culturally responsive curriculums that focuses on language and content development, provide educational technology and classroom libraries while supporting our English Learners and their families, who may lack the linguistic ability and/or resources to advocate for and participate in their child's education.

At Odyssey, we believe that students need to be intelligent consumers of information in this ever-changing information age, we educate them with that in mind. We currently have a need for a World Language Curriculum, but with not enough funding we are unable to acquire the tools needed to help students enhance their education and have a greater understanding of other students and cultures. A world language curriculum would open doors of communication, learning about other cultures, making connections to additional areas of knowledge, developing insight into the nature of language by

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comparison and the concept of culture.

I am here this evening to urge this esteemed Committee to equitably fund Charter Schools and not just brush this issue aside. At the end of the day, we are all here for the same reason, for our state's future, which is our children. I ask you to keep Odyssey's public charter school students at the forefront of your mind as you make financial decisions on behalf of all Connecticut families. Thank you for this time this evening.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you very much for your testimony and I apologize for misstating your name. Are there any comments or questions? Yes, who are you? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): At times I don't know either. Good evening. Nice to see you again. So honestly right in the heart of the district in which I represent, I just wanted to thank you for coming out today and I had a chance just recently walk through the school with a couple of your student ambassadors and were blow away by their level of knowledge, and dedication and commitment to the opportunities that you are providing. And I think about you're here today is part of a much larger conversation that we need to continue to have here at the legislature rather than continue to fight one another for the investment in education that I think we need to kind of finish the job we started with the creation of the ECS formula and really truly invest in all of our public schools and create some sort of a unified funding stream and basically fund everyone equally, not take from anyone else we're just investing in all of our children.

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GEORGIA GRESHAM: Thank you, it's workin.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good day. Next Liz Cox. Liz? There's Liz. After Liz is Izzi Greenberg. Izzi Greenberg, great. And after Izzi Gabriella, okay. Okay, go right ahead. Hi, Liz.

LIZ COX: Good Evening Chairperson Walker, Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Liz Cox and I am the Director of Common Ground Charter High School in New Haven, Connecticut.

Each year for the past decade I have stepped away from my work as a school leader to travel to Hartford to speak with you and your colleagues in the General Assembly, I genuinely value your hard work and dedication and I always appreciate the chance to talk to you. But I need to be honest with you today. I travel here, this year, to advocate for fair funding for charter schools which are chronically systematically underfunded in Connecticut. The underfunding of charter schools is one critical piece of an education funding system that is broken. Fixing that system at the end of the day depends on you, the members of the General Assembly and we are here to support you and work along side you to do this hard work. We know that an equitable education funding formula is not on the table today.

Today we are focused on steps that we can take in the direction of fair funding on the way to a real solution to the funding problem in Connecticut. We know that the Governor's budget includes a \$4 million dollar cut to the charter school budget

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line. We also know that the baseline funding for charters \$11,250 dollars per pupil is already below the foundation level. The barebones level of support that Connecticut has determined it takes to educate a public school student. The idea that we would cut from a budget that already fails to meet the barebones needs of public school students does not make sense to me. We know that you and the Governor face hard choices this year and in the midst of these hard choices I ask that you make a courageous one and that is to bring the per pupil funding of charter schools up to the foundation level of \$11,525 dollars per student.

A charter is an agreement. We do everything we can do to fulfill our part of the agreement. We welcome all students, whatever strengths and challenges they bring to the table; we work hard to help everyone of our students succeed. More than 20 percent of our students qualify for special education supports, well above the state and host district averages. Two-thirds of our students have experienced complex trauma. A large majority are growing up in low income families, a growing number are English learners. They are amazing, talented, courageous young people and they deserve fair and adequate funding. We work hard to help all of our students grow and thrive. They are working incredibly hard and they need extraordinary learning opportunities to overcome barriers to success. Our four year graduation rates consistently exceed the state average. Our college matriculation rates exceed the state average as well. In each of the last two years our ninth graders have grown more than 90 percent of their peers across the country in reading and math and these students need to make that kind

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of growth because they enter high school on average reading one-and-a half to two years below grade level. We are working hard to fulfill our end of the contract. I am asking that you continue to work to fulfill yours and make a real step towards funding equity for all public school students in Connecticut this year. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Liz and thank you for your dedication to the kids and you know I love your school and it's done a fabulous job for the community and the investment that you've done with the community that you live in cause you work with the senior center, the kids in the neighborhoods, etc. so you go beyond just the student body that you have, you are part of the community and I thank you for that. Are there any questions? Are you going to answer every one? Thank you, go right ahead.

REP. CURREY (11TH): [Laughs] Thank you, I just want to thank you also for coming and really highlight a word that you used a number of times and that's "fair" and so I think if we can continue the conversation around a fair funding for all model, I think that will definitely move us in the right direction. And to be very clear, I am not a shill for the charter school networks, I actually was quite an outspoken critic of charter schools for the last.

LIZ COX: Come visit Common Ground.

REP. CURREY (11TH): No, no, no. I have moved over to the point where choice is good, it's healthy. We are providing high quality experiences for children all over the state in a variety of different ways

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but it is a matter of making sure that we are funding that fairly for everyone. So thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Candelaria.

REP. CANDELARIA (95TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to welcome you. I've been to Common Ground multiple times and I've seen the great work that you do there. I was able to visit a couple of weeks ago, spent time seeing the students engage in conversation about higher education and their aspirations. I think that was very informative that you are engaging your students in those types of conversations so I applaud for the work that you do. So, thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you and thank you for coming here. Thank you for coming here to be with us this evening. What's the, you know, there's \$1.4 million dollars in here that applies to schools that are not closing, so there is a direct hit to those of you who are not closing and what is the direct hit to Common Ground. How will that be, you know?

LIZ COX: I don't believe there is a direct hit to Common Ground. We are though struggling with a per pupil funding that is grossly inadequate. So I mean the hit we have felt all along.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Well sure. But I mean is there, are you going to have to lose a specific number of slots because?

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LIZ COX: No, I don't believe that it will affect us in that way, this funding cut.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Just kind of less for each, you just lower your per pupil?

LIZ COX: My understanding is a per pupil hasn't been lowered but I think this is not allowing for additional seat growth, yeah. There are two other charter schools that are not going to be able to open next term.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Right, year. Okay, thank you. Appreciate it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Thank you. I'm just so happy that Representative Currey was able to show us that you're never too old to learn [Laughter]. Thank you for coming tonight, or too young to learn well we know that. Thank you for coming tonight. The base right now per student for charter schools is \$11,500, is that what it is?

LIZ COX: No, the per pupil funding for charters is \$11,250 dollars per pupil.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): \$250 okay, and that's not being changed?

LIZ COX: My understanding is that it is not.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Okay and when you talk about seats, we're talking about seats like, we're not

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talking about a grade that needs to be added in order to keep those kids in that school. Is that, that is concerning.

LIZ COX: My understanding is that grade growth is included in this budget.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): So we could have a school up to 11th grade and we not able to add a 12th grade, is that possible?

LIZ COX: That would be a problem. My understanding is that is not at issue in this. It's additional fees. There were two new charter schools.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Okay and then the last thing is, you know, it's nice to hear you talk about diversity of your students because I think when I first got up here we would always here that, you know, that the charter schools only took kids without any issues and, you know, were all good students and it was very limiting and that is not what you've said here today and I think if that was true then it certainly has evolved and I think more people need to know it. And then one more thing, I am not aware of the two schools that were planning on opening and now are being blocked from opening. Do you know what schools those are?

LIZ COX: I can get more information to you.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): That would be interesting to know which schools and how far along they were.

LIZ COX: I can get you information about those schools.

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REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Okay, thank you. Thank you for coming tonight.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and I believe one is called Trailblazers and I cannot remember the other one.

LIZ COX: I think there were two schools, one in Danbury and one in Stamford.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Stamford, correct. Stamford Academy. I thought you were talking about what closed.

LIZ COX: No, two closed.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Correct.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Madam Chairman so there are two schools in Stamford Trailblazer being one of them and now a third school?

LIZ COX: No two closed.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Two, one is Trailblazer in Stamford and one is in Danbury?

LIZ COX: Yeah, we were trying to get two additional schools opened.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): All right, thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Are there any other questions or comments? Thank you. Next we have Izzi Greenberg and after Izzi, Gabriela Ramon. Gabriela, is she here? Okay, come on down. Go right ahead.

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IZZI GREENBERG: Yeah, hello. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Izzi Greenberg, live in Middletown. I run the Middlesex Coalition for Children. I co-chair the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and probably most importantly for today I am a member of Middletown School Readiness Council.

I guess the first of all I'll start with positive. I am happy that the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership was included in the Governor's budget, that is really positive so I am nervous that negative things I say always, you know, hurt the positive things. So I want to start with [Nervous laugh], start with something good. That is really helping a lot of families and so that line is critical. I think that the thing I am most concerned with today is the \$2.7 million cut from the early care and education line that I guess we could say delays but cuts the intended increase of \$100 dollars per child for school readiness slots in the State. Certainly in Middletown and I think across the State school readiness programs are barely making it. We've got a minimum wage increase coming, the centers just can't afford to pay teachers so a delay, and this is frankly a very modest increase when it comes to the work that they are actually doing. It is not nearly what they actually need to provide the services to children and so to delay even this modest increase would be very, very hard for them especially considering that the minimum wage is rising whether we like it or not in this case. And it is not rising once, it is rising a few times over the next few years. They can't reduce staffing. Staff ratios are set. They can't charge parents more. They can't, you know,

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there's sort of a bind and so I really want to encourage you to restore that \$2.7 million dollars to the budget and allow that \$100 dollar per child increase to go forward. And that's it. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, and that wasn't too harsh.

IZZI GREENBERG: No, no.

REP. WALKER (93RD): That wasn't harsh enough but.

IZZI GREENBERG: Somebody go back to the positives.

REP. WALKER (93RD): No, no, no, that's okay. Thank you for your testimony and thank you for your advocacy. Are there any? Yes, Representative.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you so much for your testimony. I know this is really important. Do you know on average for the State if you are aware of it, or just in your area, how long it's been since some of these childcare people have received raises?

IZZI GREENBERG: Well, so what I am talking about is the rate per school readiness slot. What I guess, do you mean what the employers are receiving or what the centers are receiving for the slots?

REP. DATHAN (142ND): I was actually looking at the people who run the programs every day. My concern with this cut is it is going to limit the money that the people who are running the programs every day are going to receive. If it's been a longtime since they have received raises, you know, we're putting at risk one, my view, is looking at continuing of

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care, make sure you have the constant caregiver because children need that especially at a young age but also you want to try to avoid burnout because you want to have these people stick with their, hopefully their chosen career. So that was just more on, if it is anecdotal then fine, but, you know, if you are aware I would love to hear.

IZZI GREENBERG: My understanding is that the last increase, and again it was a modest one, was in 2015 and I don't think there have been, I should be corrected by someone who knows more than me on this, but my understanding is that any increases that have happened over the length of the program have all be really modest and not quite sufficient to run the programs but I believe the last one was in 2015. I know that I spoke with a provider yesterday who is in Middletown who said that, you know, she's sort of, she's paying the most experienced, the kind of, the most experienced teachers in her center are getting \$15 dollars per hour now so in a few years when the least experienced people are getting \$15 dollars she has to raise all those and she has no idea how she can possibly do that because the amount she is receiving per child isn't sufficient to pay. I mean the most experienced teacher in your center should be making way more than \$15 dollars an hour. So I think the idea that she wants to lift that up, she wants those teachers to be making what they deserve and what will frankly help them have the quality of life to not have the stress that they bring so much into the classroom and the more that we can reduce their stress obviously by paying them fairly, the better it is, so I think that is a real concern for centers. They have no idea how they are going to pay their staff and kind of raise the top

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up with the bottom in terms of what they are paying people.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you so much for your testimony.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Comments? Thank you. Thank you for testifying.

IZZI GREENBERG: Thank you very much, have a nice afternoon.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You too. Gabriela Ramon and then Merrill Gay and then Deb Polun.

GABRIELA RAMON: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Thank you so much for your time. My name is Gabriela Ramon and I am from Danbury. As a mother of three, my biggest dream is to provide my children with a very good education and to make sure they grow in a safe environment.

As a member of the Danbury community, I am here to ask this committee for their support in opening Danbury Prospect Charter School. This school will ensure that the kids in our community have all the tools they need to achieve their full potential. As a parent, I would like my children to achieve a prosperous future, where they develop a lifelong love of education and it can become a very important part of their lives. Unfortunately, as a negative impact of the overcrowded classrooms in our Danbury Public Schools I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with many parents who are concerned and uncertain of what future holds for our children if

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there is no solution given. When Danbury Prospect Charter School is willing to provide a tuition-free a wonderful world-class program which also helped dramatically with the overcrowded schools. I definitely support this initiative. Not only will benefit our kids with a great World Class Learning Program, excellent teaching, and diversity. It will also be an important addition to our growing City of Danbury. I also believe that the minority community, especially Latinos do not have adequate educational options for their children. Many of our parents face the dilemma of having to pay for a private school they can't afford or send their kids to school that are either too big or severely overcrowded. Danbury Prospect is another option that is ready to open this year and can give our community a much-needed option. We believe as parents that we should have the option to choose to the best of our interest in the education of our kids and Prospect Charter School is a school that we support and believe in. I ask you, please help us convince our own legislators to support this school and include it in this year's budget. It will make a world of difference to many parents like myself who would benefit from a school that offers such diversity and an international program in our city. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. So I guess what you are asking us to do is to talk to your legislators. Have you talked to your legislators in Danbury about the school?

GABRIELA RAMON: Yes, we try but we don't see a long commitment to open the school so it is very

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difficult and I don't know much about politics and, you know, any kind of political views and stuff.

REP. WALKER (93RD): We don't either [Laughter]. We make this up, no.

GABRIELA RAMON: It's so hard to understand that we're talking about our kids education and we're facing such a brick wall and I don't see a commitment, you know, that we know that schools are overcrowded in Danbury and we are, we know that we are facing and our community knows how hard it is to face that problem and we don't see a solution immediately. We don't see a solution right away; nothing has been offered.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Well I hope that later you have a chance to sit down with your legislators as a group to talk about it and maybe, I don't know.

GABRIELA RAMON: We did.

REP. WALKER (93RD): With what the questions and concerns are.

GABRIELA RAMON: We did and it wasn't clear to us what exactly is gonna happen.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. Questions? Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Good evening, hi Merrill. Go right ahead.

MERRILL GAY: Representative Walker, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I want to talk about two line items in the OEC Budget and one in the SDE Budget. They are

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the \$2.7 million dollar cut, the Early Head Start Funding and the cut to funding for after school programs.

So the Early Childhood Alliance is extremely concerned about the Governor's proposed cut of \$2.7 million dollars. That is the money you put into the budget last year to both resolve the inequity between the funding for state funded centers and School Readiness programs. The state funded Child Development Centers providing the same NAEYC accredited care are getting paid \$327 dollars less per child per year than the School Readiness Programs. The School Readiness Programs haven't gotten an increase in five years. So last year when you passed the increase in minimum wage you did something that has evaded the Early Childhood world for 30 years which is actually give people a raise. We've been trying to increase salaries in the early care field for years, and years, and years and we still have some of the lowest paid people in the workforce. The issue now is that as those wages go up the cost of providing childcare is going to go about 30% higher. And unlike other businesses, you can't replace early care teachers with a robot. You know, little kids need human contact. We have ratios set in law because of that and unlike the private centers that aren't subsidized that will raise their tuitions the subsidized programs are limited in how much they can charge because they charge on a sliding scale so they are already charging parents all they can charge them. And so now they are stuck in this bind of having costs go up but no revenue to pay the cost. And this is going to, as minimum wage goes up create an ever growing crisis within Early Childhood. And the

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first place we are going to see that is in experienced teachers leaving because they're not getting raises while everybody is getting a raise because the program can't afford to do it. There is already far too much turnover in the early care world because wages are low and we know that turnover is really bad for little kids. They need consistent adult relationships for their healthy development. To have, you know, a different teacher every couple of months because people keep turning over is just a bad situation.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Could you restate your name please, sir. They didn't get it.

MERRILL GAY: I'm sorry. Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. So that's the big issue. The other thing we are thrilled to see the funding for the Early Head Start Partnership back in there. That was the key piece of state money to match the very competitive federal grant that we got and so it's important to have that state money.

And then the other piece that is hurting providers is the cut to the afterschool funding. A lot of the after school programs are also early care programs who are taking care of older siblings after school and so they are just feeling this crunch from lots of different directions. So I hope that you can help to strengthen that early care system and make sure that parents still have a place to take their kids so they can go to work.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Merrill and you know, your testimony is something that I wish the

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two gentlemen from CBIA were here to hear, were here to hear. Oh, there you are. Good, he is here. Okay [Laughter]. Thank you. The comment that the gentleman said was that we should support and use nonprofits to deliver services and that's what your organization is, it is a nonprofit organization that delivers services that the Office of Early Childhood wants to carryout but the problem we have is we can't get enough teachers because the pay is too.

MERRILL GAY: Too low.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you for filling in that [Laughter]. This is audience participation. So I think these are examples of where we have cut off our nose to spite our face. We know that having children with better quality early care gets them into a better school and gets them into a better job. So these are things that we have to follow the dotted line beyond today to see what we're doing when we do these cuts. So thank you, sir for your support, your advocacy and I guess I talk long enough so somebody is gonna want to say something. Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Just very, very briefly. Hello, Merrill. Thank you. As we go forward and we look at the parity with the funding streams would you be able to break that out so that we could see the dollar amount difference between them as I know we've attended you workshops and seminars and I know during that we were educated that a lot of the problem too with the Early Infant and Toddlers how much that costs in comparison so it gets very confusion, it is so complex with all the various streams coming between the Early School Readiness

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and the childcare but I think we would be appreciative if we could have more breakdown in how you see that going forward.

MERRILL GAY: Sure, I'd be happy to get that to you. The primary issues, we had two childcare programs, one that used to be DSS and one that was at SDE and they merged. Part of the whole push behind merging the two was to get this all in one place, get it unified, not have the differences between the two and we now have them in the same line item which a couple of years ago was seen as a key step in being able to reach parity was to get them both in the same line item. Well they're in the same line item, we still haven't gotten to parity. So those programs are getting paid \$327 dollars less per kid, per year. Now that doesn't sound like a huge amount of money but if you're trying to run a program and when we literally have programs that have both a state funded center and a school readiness program in the same building on, you know, classrooms on opposite sides of the hall and you have, one has less money to pay for the teachers than the other one.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Dathan.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and thank you very much for your testimony. This is really, really invaluable. I had a constituent email me on this today and unfortunately she didn't have time to come up to the Capital to testify but one thing she said in her testimony which I was a bit surprised at, and I haven't heard back an answer on it, she says to me, "Are you aware that unlike Head Start, there is no provision for

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School Readiness providers to pay for lunch for their students" and she sees students come with empty lunchboxes or nothing in hand every day to these programs. Is that your experience and if we are feeding these children is this coming out of this budget so we're just putting additional stress on it?

MERRILL GAY: So there is the, I can never remember what the initials stand for but the food program that is available and in some communities where you have a high concentration of poor zip codes the programs, if they are located in that zip code are eligible for it automatically and they use the funding to pay for lunch. Other places kids bring their lunch and I can do some more digging on that and get you some more information.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): I'm just curious because I feel that if we're putting additional stress by having to provide food for children that is even less that we have to provide the services that were to happen. Thank you so much and I appreciate your testimony. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, sir and thank you for your testimony. Have a good evening. Next we have Melissa Clark. Bring the kids, come on, bring the kids. We moved her up a little bit because of the fact that she had children and Deb was very nice to let her go before her, so thank you. Whenever we see children we know they should be home, not here [Laughs] we would like to be home. They are so cute. You can sit in the chair, sit in the chair, yeah and press the button in front of the microphone, press the button so that it turns on.

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Is yours one? Okay, good. Go ahead and make sure you state your name please.

MELISSA CLARK: Okay, Hi. Good evening my name is Melissa Clark I am the parent of Akeem Clark. He current attends Brass City Charter School in Waterbury, Connecticut.

I am here to talk about the education in my community. I just found out that there are plans to cut the budget for charter schools and I highly urge not to. If anything I want to maintain consistent funding state funding for charter schools and the reason while I say that is because my son first started Brass City Charter School as a pre-K student and I've seem, I am very happy with what the school has been doing and the potential, I see that they are trying to do now. Just last year my son, I'm sorry, I'm nervous. Just last year my son as a pre-K student was learning how to identify emotions and learn how to manage his emotions and I think that is very important to have in a school especially in a charter school that service families who are mostly of low income background. And I said that because a lot of students in those communities are not in stable homes or stable environments and a lot of that will be reflected in their emotions. A lot of students have issues at school, behavioral issues and that was reflected from their environment outside of schools. So to have a school like Brass City Charter School to address issues like emotional management, I think that is very important to teach at a young age because that will help them become successful students in the future.

He is in kindergarten now so I also like how this

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year they started teaching him how to use a computer. They have him programs to upload called i-Ready to use in the classroom, to use it at home and he is learning very well both at home and at school and I think that is very important when it comes to education because technology is the future and it teaches him the basic needs, the basic requirements that's needed, the basic computer skills needed for any evolving technological future. You know.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Don't rush, go ahead. I see you holding them and trying to read your thing at the same time, see that's mothers. Mothers have to multitask all the time; I so appreciate it.

MELISSA CLARK: Yes, I'm sorry. Another thing too I wanted to say too, I do appreciate Brass City Charter School is encouraging parents involvement and that is important for our community as well. Like I said the family of low income families and, you know, to have a student that is in a very good school like Brass City Charter School, they have the resources there, they are performing very well academically. You know, that gives parents and families one less burden to worry about. Many families, you know, they live check to check, you know, they struggle to make ends meet and to know that their child, they don't have to worry about their child in a good school because they have a stable school that is offering them good nutrition, you know, they are in a safe location and they are getting the education they need. You know, I don't understand, I don't want the funding to be cut. That is something that should be overlooked. Education is a must. It.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): It is not an option.

MELISSA CLARK: Yeah. You know, a lot of families I'm sure want to be here and they can't because they have to work especially from low income families, they are working nine-to-five, around the clock two, three, four, five jobs. I am fortunate enough to be here being a voice for those parents, that is what you really should reconsider.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Could you do me a favor? Could you ask your energetic young man over there to please state his name in the microphone so that we can have his name on the record please? Can you say your name in the microphone? Pull the microphone down and say your name.

AKEEM CLARK: Akeem Clark.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Say it again.

AKEEM CLARK: Akeem Clark.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Akeem Clark, thank you for coming to the General Assembly today and testifying for your school. Thank you for what you are doing, okay? And thank you for coming and for, thank you for coming up here and being an advocate for your children and the children that all attend Brass City, so thank you very much. Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just want to thank the Clark family for coming up here and advocating for a great school at the very north end of my district. It is a school which I've had

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plenty of opportunity to tour through with Dr. Rosairo. I am very proud of what the kids have done there but I am more impressed and proud by the parent participation and I think that is what makes that school take it to another level. And so continue success to your son and I told him I would see him for Dr. Seuss Day. Thank you for coming up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good evening. Thank you. Senator Winfield, I'm sorry did you want to say something? Okay, thanks. Deb Polun, thank you Deb. After Deb, Shontae Williams. Is Shontae Williams here? Shontae Williams here? Going once, going twice. Okay Ronelle Swaggerty. Okay, good. Go right ahead Deb.

DEB POLUN: They do say, never take your turn after a child unless you are the bride [Laughter]. I'm not a bride. For the record my name is Deb Polun and I am the newish Executive Director at the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). Good evening and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak this evening.

I am here like others before me to express concern with the Governor's proposal to delay the rate increase for full-day school readiness and childcare providers to FY 2022. And you may know your local Community Action Agency, I hope that you do. Our network of community actions agencies served 259,000 low and moderate income people across Connecticut every year, in all of your districts and we provider services like Nutrition through SNAP enrollment, Meals on Wheels, and Senior Cafes, housing and

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shelter, asset development, job training, energy assistance and childcare. In fact, about 5,600 children received childcare through a community action agency last year across the State, 5,600. So why childcare? It's because it is part of a multigenerational approach to addressing poverty and removing barriers to economic success and community involvement and community improvement.

We know that access to high-quality early childhood education is essential in helping to break the cycle of poverty. And one of the barriers to full employment for low income parents and really for all families is the cost of childcare. If you paid for childcare for your kids you know what I'm talking about. The cost of childcare often exceed the cost of your mortgage. It can be the most expensive bill you pay in a month. According to the Economic Policy Institute the average cost of childcare in Connecticut is \$15,501 dollars for an infant and \$12,731 dollars for a four-year-old. So you can imagine that even with the childcare subsidies that are coming through, even if a rate increase were to go through, we are not adequately reimbursing our childcare providers. Right now the current reimbursement rate, set by statute, is \$8,927 dollars a year so slightly more than half of what the actual cost is. The increase that the Legislature and the Governor wisely chose to put in last year is a small step forward for helping to allow childcare providers to make ends meet. Is that my buzzer? Or was that, all right. No problem. I'll wrap up them.

REP. WALKER (93RD): That was for the speaker next door. [Laughter]

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DEB POLUN: You never know. I'll wrap up. So speakers prior to me mentioned some of the drivers here. We have staffing ratios so we can't cut staff unless we cut customers. Who are our customers? Children and families. So that is now what we want to be doing. We don't want to be serving fewer people. The minimum wage is wonderful but that causes wage compression and we also cannot raise the sliding fees. So I would ask that the Legislature reject the call to delay the rate increase, the rate increase is sorely needed to help provide high quality childcare to all of our children across the State. Thank you and thank you for your indulgence for the extra minute or so.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Any comments. Thank you, ma'am. Have a good evening. Shontae Williams, no? Okay, Ronelle Swaggerty and after Ronelle, Liz and after Liz, Marcus Brown. Is Marcus Brown here? No, he is not here. Okay, thank you.

RONELLE SWAGGERTY: Good afternoon esteemed Members of the Appropriations Committee. I know your work is not easy and I'd like to acknowledge that publicly and thank you for your commitment to the state, its children and families. My name is Ronelle Swaggerty. I am the Executive Director of New Beginnings Family Academy public charter school in Bridgeport. NBFA serves 499 students, grades Pre-K through 8th. I am here today to make the case for supporting public charter students in the Governor's budget and rejecting cuts that will unfairly impact many of Connecticut's highest need students.

I have been affiliated with NBFA for 16 of its 18

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years. I have served as its director for the last five. Under my leadership, New Beginnings Family Academy has transformed a low-income school serving 96% Black and Hispanic students from every corner of Bridgeport from a punitive, no excuses model with a 15% suspension rate in 2015 to one in which children learn by doing in an environment where consequences are largely natural and logical rather than punitive. As a result of this fundamental shift in pedagogy, our suspension rates have been under one percent since 2016 and the learning environment is healthy and nurturing. In 2019, NBFA outperformed its host district in ELA, Math and chronic absenteeism rates. We outpaced the state in the percentage of students meeting their growth targets in both subjects. In fact, NBFA's math growth rate exceeded that of the state. And, according to the 2019 Next Generation Accountability system results, NBFA ranks among the top three Bridgeport charter schools. Charter schools provide parents and guardians the opportunity to choose a high quality educational system that best meets the needs of their children. Low and middle income families exercise their rights and choose charter schools in the same way that parents of means choose to move into well-to-do neighborhoods with abundantly resourced public schools or pay to enroll their students in expensive private schools. The only difference is that one set of parents can afford to pay tuition directly out-of-pocket and the other can't. I'm almost done. Charter school personnel don't choose their students. We take whatever students come to us through a blind lottery system and do all we can educating them with even less funding than our already cash-strapped district.

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Charter students already receive below the minimum wage for their education and the proposed cuts could help to remedy that. Please don't let any more funding for the neediest students be taken out of the budget.

As a State we should be providing more money for public education not less. I implore you, Members of the Appropriations Committee to do the right thing by all public school students but at this time I sit before you asking that you reject any notion of cutting funding for charter schools. The budget should never be balanced on the backs of the neediest families in the State.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you very much. Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and good evening, Ronelle. Good to see you. Thanks for coming. I just want to echo your sentiments. I know you do a phenomenal job in the classroom but one thing that we don't talk about is your commitment to the community. You are a great neighbor to the South End and all the cleanups and everything that you do to give back not only during the school day but outside the school day as a whole so I just want to thank you. Hopefully I will get a chance to visit again soon. It is a world-class facility and thank you once again.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other? Yes. Representative Felipe.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all welcome to Hartford. You are literally in my

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backyard.

RONELLE SWAGGERTY: I know.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): And as somebody who has grown up and continues to live in the area that you guys serve. You know I was a young Hispanic man who grew up in that school system, Hispanic child that grew up in that school system and really didn't have the educational opportunities I would have liked to have, you know, going to failing elementary school, after failing elementary school and to have an opportunity to be taught in an environment like the environment that you put your kids in is something that I definitely would have given a lot for in hindsight and something I think we need to preserve. I am right there with you and thank you so much for your testimony.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you.

RONELLE SWAGGERTY: Parent choice is incredibly important.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Right. Any other comments or questions? Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Have a good evening. Liz. And after Liz is Marcus Brown, no Marcus Brown, sorry. Karen Pascale, Karen, okay good. Go right ahead.

LIZ FRASER: Hi, I'm Liz Fraser. I am the Policy Director at the Connecticut Association for Human Services and thank you for hosting tonight. I am here today to voice concerns about the proposed 20-21 Budget Adjustments in the Governor's Budget. But again, first I want to acknowledge the positives and

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as my colleagues have suggested the increases to the Birth to Three Program is fabulous. We need to insure that all children, all young children from birth to three that may have a developmental need for services receives those services. We also are really excited about the inclusion of the Early Head Start Healthcare Partnership money as well.

However, there is several programs that were cut and will negatively impact our children and our families and our programs in Connecticut. And I won't go into great detail on this because you've already heard this but the restoration of the \$2.7 million cut to the Early Care and Education line is really important to put back in for all the reasons that you've heard. If a program has 50 kids, we are talking about \$5,000 dollars and our programs need it, this little bit of money for their programs, they really need. So it might help with the minimum wage, it is not going to fix it though and I think the bigger picture is that we really have a looming childcare crisis coming and I think, oops, the men from CBI left, however [Laughter] just in time for me to say something. If we are going to have a state with an economy that is flourishing we need to have childcare there for people to come. It connects directly to the economic development of our State just like our highways and we need to make sure that we fund it and that it is available so that young people who have also, need to buy a house hopefully so that we can sell our houses as we get older, that have a lot of student debt can also afford the childcare in this State. So we need to fix it and it's becoming much more problematic. So that is my two cents on that.

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We also ask for somethings for the State Department of Education. The afterschool programs, to cut them is absurd, these children need a place to go after school, they need to have people to help them with their homework and a safe place to be and we cannot allow one child to be out on the street if we can help it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Can you sum up Liz?

LIZ FRASER: Parents Trust Fund, put that back in, adult education that is another place where we connect adult education to early childhood and fix that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Don't go anywhere? Are there any questions or comments? Thank you, ma'am. Karen Pascale, Joyce Lewis. Is Joyce Lewis here? Okay, you are right after Karen and after Joyce is Michelle Cunningham. Great.

KAREN PASCALE: Good evening, Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee. My name is Karen Pascale and I am the Director of United Way of Great New Haven Early Head Start Partnership Program. So, on behalf of United Way I am here to support the Early Head Start Partnership funding.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Pull you mic closer or pull you closer to the mic, yeah.

KAREN PASCALE: Is that better? Okay. As you may recall this funding was removed last year based on the assumption that the Federal Early Head Start Funding was going away. I am pleased to share that United Way of Greater New Haven received an award

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for a new five-year project period. And I commend Governor Lamont for restoring and actually expanding the carveout funding to support the federal grant. As we heard earlier we know a child's brain is 90 percent developed by age five which make these early childhood years so very important. That is why United Way believes all children should have access to high quality care and education. We fight to break the cycle of poverty by providing children of low income families with a comprehensive program to meet their social, emotion, health and nutritional needs and also support the family. Our program serve 88 infants and toddlers and their families living in New Haven, West Haven and Hamden. We work with four community partners to do so. So we work with All Our Kin, network of family childcare providers, Elizabeth Celotto Child Care Center which is located within Wilbur Cross High School and exclusively serves teenage parents enrolled in New Haven Public Schools, Morning Glory Infant and Toddler Center which is an accredited center in New Haven's West River Neighborhood as well as West Haven Child Development Center. West Have Child Development Center is a longtime staple in the community but this is the only early Head Start classroom in the city.

So just a little background, Early Head Start is a federal to local program that provides child development and family center services for income eligible families. It is a two generational program that focuses on the well-being of the child as well as building a relationship with the family and also connecting parents with services that enable them to pursue goals such as going back to school or getting a job.

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The layering of the carveout funding for this program really helps transform opportunities for low income families with infants and toddlers that often face the greatest barriers to accessing the supports and services they need to thrive. Carveout funding goes directly to our partners and it covers the cost of care and comprehensive services, the largest component of that cost is teacher and family childcare provider salaries. Without that funding our program would be forced to reduce the number of children we serve by half. That would be 31 children who no longer have access to the partnership and we know Connecticut faces a shortage of 50,000 licensed childcare slots for infants and toddlers. One quick family story, a reduction in slots would mean fewer families finding success like Serra. Serra was a parenting teen whose daughters Chloe and Zoe were enrolled in our partner agency Elizabeth Celotto. With Chloe entering kindergarten and Zoe thriving at the Center Serra was able to focus on her schooling. She has said, "The reason why I was able to make it where I am is because I had support." She will graduate in May with a BA in English and there is countless more stories. Many in written testimony. I urge you to support the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership Funding.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony and everything. Thank you, have a good day. Joyce Lewis. After Joyce, Michelle Cunningham and after Michelle Cunningham, David Kulick. Good evening.

JOYCE LEWIS: My Name is Joyce Lewis. I am the Executive Vice President of Key Human Services an agency providing services to individuals across the

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lifespan statewide. Today I am here speaking on behalf of our Birth to Three Program. First I want to thank you for your ongoing support for Birth to Three over the years. Thank you for annualizing \$2.9 million dollars to better support the growing population of Birth to Three. We really appreciate it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Could you get closer to the mic for me please?

JOYCE LEWIS: Oh, sure. You are not the first person to say that me ever [Laughter]. Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands of people. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work.

I am here to respectfully request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over the next five years for community nonprofits. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. Please commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million dollars, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million dollars after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future. A portion of this funding could be used to eliminate the Parent Cost Participation Fee in Birth to Three services.

In 2003, the legislature approved the proposal to

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begin charging families for Birth to Three services as an additional funding stream beyond private insurance, Medicaid, state appropriation and federal funding. This is an allowable action under IDEA. The projection for this funding stream was \$2 million dollars but Birth to Three has never collected \$2 million dollars a year in the 17 years that it has existed. The revenue for Parent Cost Participation otherwise known as family fees runs typically runs around \$1.2 million dollars annually.

Let's talk now about the consequences of charging families for participation in Birth to Three. In 2003, the profile of Birth to Three insurance coverage was 37% Medicaid and 63% private insurance. Over the years of family fees there has been a dramatic shift. The profile is now 35% private insurance and 65% Medicaid while in Connecticut overall only 20% of the population was covered by Medicaid in 2019. What do these figures tell us? Do children on Medicaid need Birth to Three more than children on private insurance? Has the incidence of developmental delays somehow shifted to primarily children on Medicaid? The answer to both of these questions is obviously no. It tells us that Parent Cost Participation fees are driving families out of the Birth to Three system. Families cannot afford this burdensome monthly fee on top all of the costs associated with living in Connecticut.

I'll skip over this next section about the effectiveness of these services and the dollars spent but I want to ask you to please eliminate the Parent Cost Participation fees. Just because you can does not mean you should. Thank you very much.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony.

JOYCE WELLS: I understand there was a lot of conversation about Birth to Three earlier today, if you have any questions, I am more than open to response.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, thank you very much for your testimony and for being here. I did have some questions this morning about the recent RFP for Birth to Three services and I just wondered if you had any comments on that to share?

JOYCE WELLS: Well, I do [Laughter]. How interesting that you should ask. We are a program that has been a Birth to Three provider for 26 years in the State of Connecticut. We will be closing our Birth to Three Program April 30th. Well we were selected in the RFP for one town, obviously can't run a program and just serve one town in Connecticut so we will be closing our doors after 26 years of service in Birth to Three in the State of Connecticut and I just feel that it is a huge loss as it has turned out. I have great respect for the system but I feel that the process may not have represented quality in the way we might have liked.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Can you elaborate on that a little about representing quality?

JOYCE WELLS: Well I think there was a very little opportunity. There was no opportunity might be a better way to put it for providers to indicate their

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history and quality performance within the system. So in order to judge programs with no representation of the services they provided that really skews the process.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): What were you required to provide in terms of information?

JOYCE WELLS: This was a new model of questions that were very much open ended questions describe your leadership practices, describe your quality assurance practices, nothing about history. We did provide handouts that we use, kind of we described the processes and protocols that we use Birth to Three so if you knew the process and protocol I guess that would be an example of your history. But in other ways I think that didn't address the history and quality that could have been addressed in this process.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): How many towns did you serve before?

JOYCE WELLS: Eleven, we serve 125 families that we will be forced to transition during this challenging upcoming time.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): So who, will those, will the families in those 11 as it turns out that extra one will be in, in those 11 towns, will they have a provider in the vicinity or will it be somewhere else?

JOYCE WELLS: Yes. Yes, there is, you know, in that regard there is choice and there are opportunities for service. There was a much larger choice of

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providers and it narrowed down now to 18 providers in the State of Connecticut. But in every town there will be more than one choice, I believe.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay. Thank you, that is very useful to know. Appreciate it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good day. Next, Michelle. After Michell, David and after David, Kevin Allverez. Go right ahead.

MICHELE CUNNINGHAM: Good evening Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Michelle Doucette Cunningham, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network and I am here today to ask you to fully fund the state funded afterschool grant program.

In your wisdom you increased this line item by \$1 million dollars last year and those funds have gone out to the programs for a two year grant and a cut would eliminate 10 percent of the funding to those programs that are starting. The families and the children who benefit from programs benefit academically, socially and emotionally and the parents get the peace of mind they can work knowing that their children are safe and it is so essential both to the children and the families and I think there is not a reasoning behind this. Everybody understands that these programs are tremendous investment in the children that they serve. Certainly the research shows that math and literacy achievement differences between low and high-income and students can be basically eliminated with high

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quality programs over time. We know that program attendance improves student attendance during the school day. Having something fun to do after school gives you a reason to go in the morning sometimes. It improves behavior in schools so that their social behaviors and the problem behaviors are different and their school grades and test scores go up. It's really a wonderful investment in our children and families.

I have quite a number of years yet before I retire regarding of the gray but it is my goal and within 20 years we are able to really provide these types of services to every child who needs it in Connecticut and making a cut like this would really go in the wrong direction. So I really would like to just leave you with the numbers. It would hurt more than 500 children right now the service is in 75 nonprofit municipal and school sites in 28 towns and cities including both multiple grants in most of the larger but also in some of the small towns. So in the expansion that happened last year some of that went to some of the small towns and the kids that have no place else to go and nothing else happening in those town are benefiting now to, so Sprague, and Scotland and a number of communities in Northwestern Connecticut are all benefiting now. So thank you for that investment last year and I hope we can keep the momentum going in the correct direction.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you for your testimony and yes we understand the need for afterschool. It's kinda sad when, well some of us are on an organization called Juvenile Justice Policy and Operation and we're addressing the fact that

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children don't have anything to do in the afternoons and they wonder why they get in trouble and I don't know about you but in my childhood I had to have structure at least some sort of structure to keep me out of trouble. I think all children should have some sort of structure and after school is one of the best things that we've got that, it's like the best kept secret and it also provides us with security of know that we can work and our child is going to be safe when I finish. So to me you do a fabulous job. So you said, how many organizations did you serve with the money last year?

MICHELLE CUNNINGHAM: So 75 grants, 75 sites. There is about 35 grants that come but many of the grants serve multiple sites, they are able to spread the money across different schools within their town.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And if we put in another \$1 million dollars we would be able to reach more sites, correct?

MICHELLE CUNNINGHAM: Absolutely. The demand for these grants is three grants go unfunded for every one that does. We could fill this capacity doubled tomorrow.

REP. WALKER (93RD): So three-for-one. Okay, that is a good number for us to remind people when they talk to us about this cut. So thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions or comments? Yes, Representative McCarty.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Through you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to ask you, did you submit testimony?

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MICHELLE CUNNINGHAM: I did.

REP. MC CARTY (38TH): Thank you, I just want to look at the reference you made to some of the data. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, I was told not to tell everybody [Laughter], the staff over there was saying we've got so much testimony don't tell everybody its online cause we're still trying to put them online. So yes, it is online but thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony. Oh, Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Hi, good evening. What would the target number be to be able to fill all the grant requests that are out there?

MICHELLE CUNNINGHAM: Grant requests for immediate capacity if they were to refill it would have to be \$20 million dollars instead of \$5 million dollars. That still wouldn't serve every child who needs it but it would sure go a long way to meeting the gap and building the capacity the State needs.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay, I appreciate that and I think that you are looking for a reason why this cut happened and I think we are all wondering the reason for a lot of this stuff, so.

MICHELLE CUNNINGHAM: Agreed, agreed.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I think it said to achieve savings. But do we achieve savings or do we pay for it on the other end? I think we have to take that term a little bit deeper, thank you. Thank you for

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your testimony. David and then Kevin and after Kevin, Jade Thomas. Jade? Okay, great.

DAVID KULICK: Good evening, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is David Kulick and I am the Co-President of Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children. And on behalf of our nearly 1,100 early childhood education and care professionals across the state that make up our membership, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening.

As we all know Early Childhood Care and Education is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. Simply put a child's early years lay the foundation for what's to come next. In recent years researches have learned that human brain development, or expect human brain develops the majority of its neurons and is at its most receptive to learning between birth and three years of age. Really the overwhelming evidence shows that children who enter kindergarten behind are likely to remain behind throughout their education careers and beyond.

One of our board members, a principal at an elementary school in Connecticut points out, she has witnessed this firsthand throughout her career as a education. These gaps in achievement are difficult that expensive to close with K-12 education alone. We therefore have a responsibility to help insure children show up to kindergarten, ready to learn by

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providing our youngest learners with the options to access high quality early childhood programs from ages zero to five where they can develop a full range of skills necessary to be successful in school and life.

On that note we very much oppose the proposed cuts to the Governor's budget specifically around the \$2.7 million cut to Early Care and Education line item. As many of my colleagues have pointed out earlier this minimum wage, with the minimum wage increase coming in September the cost for early education care increases and there is nothing to offset those costs. This is going to put an already jeopardized and frail system into further damage and further fragility if you will say.

So on that note, we very much implore you to restore that funding. Connecticut AYC stands for quality for all childcare programs. Any cuts to state funding for childcare will decrease that quality. These cuts will result in programs laying off experienced staff members, reducing the amount of activities for children and an overall reduction in the quality of availability of programs in Connecticut. High quality, affordable and consistent early childhood educational care with compensated teachers is important for Connecticut's short-term and long-term economy because it helps parents maintain employment and supports young children cognitive and emotional development thereby helping to build in tomorrow's workforce. We thank you for taking this under consideration.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, thank you for your testimony and I think you heard the tone from the

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General Assembly appear and thank you very much. Have a good day. Kevin and then Jade and after Jade, Liz Brown.

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: Hello everyone. My name is Kevin Allverez. I am the Director of Legislative Affairs for the City of New Haven and I want to thank you all for the work that you do around education and just for our State in general.

I will try to keep my remarks brief because I am terrified of that bell and testimony was already submitted by the CFO of New Have Public Schools to recommend greater flexibility in Alliance dollars that the City of New Haven Receives. We are committed to fully fulfilling the goals of Alliance funding and being truly innovative in our approach. Innovation is critically important to us as a City and has been part of the engine that drives the exciting development that we've seen in the last several years. I think there is an instinct for us to talk about the way that we, as a State, can be innovative in the face of our challenges. Often times that drives us to take a different approach to old problems and think differently about achieving our goals. But I think it is also important to remember that innovation is not the solution to inequality. No matter how innovative our approach is, no matter how innovative we'll account for property based education system in a city with over 55 percent of its property being nontaxable. Innovation alone will not address consistently rising fixed costs being met with increases in narrowly restricted dollars at a rate lower than inflation. Innovation alone does not account for centuries of racial segregation, intergenerational

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poverty and limited access to resources. Over the past 20 years the City has reduced its staff by 20 percent. New Haven has some of the most economically disadvantaged residents of the State just based on 11 percent tax increase in a single year. Innovation and fiscal responsibility alone do not solve this problem. Innovation is not the equal of adequate funding and fiscal responsibility does not account for having enough money to fund basic operations. New Haven is committed to inclusive growth and while we have seen growth for those entering our City we are not seeing it at the same rate for those being raised in our City. The financial challenges we face are not the result of our predecessor, any one administration or even one generation of Connecticut. It the challenge at the core of our State and it begins with education. Our schools are exceptional as the result of great teachers, parents, board of ed's staff, our board or Alders, past mayors, our state delegation as well as all of you here who have fought and done the best that you can with what you got. But we've spent decades being innovative in the face of not having enough to work with. Imagine what we could do, what Connecticut could be if we addressed the root of the problem rather than being creative in the face of it. The long-term future of our schools and the inclusive growth of our City are, as a whole, depends on partnership with the State. I implore you to act urgently to insure that our cities that are central to the economic future of Connecticut have consistent, reliable funding to cover their operation costs through unrestricted ECS dollars. I have no illusions that this isn't an easy task but every year spent not addressing the real problem is more costly in the long run. New Haven is committed

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to working alongside of all of you to make our City and Connecticut as a whole a place where opportunity is central to our story and where every resident has the opportunity to thrive. Thank you all very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Kevin. Thank you for your testimony. Tell all the parents in New Haven back there we appreciate their testimony, right in our airways today. That is very good. That lets everybody know that they are watching everything and we thank you for that. Are there any questions or comments? Representative Currey.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Thanks for your comments, really appreciate that and I think you hit the nail right on the head. It is no secret or surprise that Alliance, excuse me, Alliance dollars are being utilized for operational costs throughout all the districts that are receiving that. I know myself sat across from former Commissioner and basically requested to us a substantial majority of that for operational costs and were granted that. So would you be in favor of completely removing the restrictions on these dollars and just rolling this, calling it flat ECS for what it is?

KEVIN ALLVEREZ: So I think that is a conversation that we need to have about that best will be implemented because I don't know if that is necessarily the right solution or if it is an administrative fix. But I think New Haven is open to exploring whatever will be most effective making sure that we can actually fund our operating budget and operating costs.

REP. CURREY (11TH): Okay, thank you very much.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Any other comments or questions? Nope. Thank you. Okay Jade Thomas and then Liz Brown and then Penny Marzulli, great. Go right ahead Jade.

JADE THOMAS: Good evening, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jade Thomas and I serve as the Connecticut Policy Fellow at All Our Kin, a non-profit that supports family childcare providers to become licensed and provide high quality care. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Governor's proposed early childhood budget. I am here to address funding for the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and the \$2.7 million dollar cut to the Early Care and Education line item.

All Our Kin is happy is happy to see funds for the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership restored to the Governor's budget. We would like to thank the Governor and this Committee for continuing to invest in Connecticut's children and families. The Early Head Start Childcare Partnership as Karen mentioned brings together the best of early Head Start and childcare through layering funding from different sources to provide comprehensive services to infants, toddlers and their families. This partnership is essential, it supports our State's most underserved and under-resourced families.

As was mentioned this was taken out of the budget last year based on the assumption that the funds were going away and I just want to underscore that without State dollars we are jeopardizing valuable federal funds that enable children to succeed in

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school and in life while enabling their parents to pursue stable employment. We urge you to continue to support, excuse me, we urge you to support the proposed funds for the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you so much for your testimony.

JADE THOMAS: May I just?

REP. WALKER (93RD): I'm sorry.

JADE THOMAS: I just wanted to talk about the Early Care and Education. We are disappointed to note a delay of a planned \$2.7 million dollar increase in the Early Childhood budget. This funding would improve providers, would help providers comply with minimum wage increases. The Governor's proposed budget cut delays the \$100 dollar raise per full day/full year slot for another year. Without these funds school Readiness and Child Development Centers cannot come close to meeting their costs. State reimbursement rates have not kept pace with the cost of living and childcare programs cannot raise their rates to cover the additional expenses, some will not survive the year without this increase. As you do everything in your power to help children and their families succeed, All Our Kin urges you to support the Governor's proposed funding for Early Head Start Childcare Partnerships and to approve funds for the \$2.7 million dollar increases to Early Care and Education for fiscal year 2021. Thank you for your time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you, Jade.

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Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for coming up and advocating for All Our Kin, it's a jewel all by itself and you guys do a fabulous job of helping other cities and other programs around the State understand how it can be best developed, so I thank you for that and I thank you for your testimony. Are there any comments or questions? No? You did a great job. Thank you. Liz Brown. Penny Marzulli and Virginia DeLong. Is Virginia DeLong here? Great.

LIZ BROWN: Good evening, Representative Walker, Senator Osten and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee. I have a couple of hats tonight, I'll take a couple of minutes on here on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. I am the First Vice-President of CABA but I also serve on the Waterbury Board of Education and I have five points that I would like to make pertaining to the Education budget.

We are very supportive and really thank the Legislature and the Governor for keeping the commitment to the 2017 phase in to increase town's with the formula. It is based on need and it has helped I think give us a better distribution of the formula, so thank you.

Number two, I think you have heard this a lot. The excess costs of Special Ed, the cap and the flat funding over the years. Just for an example Waterbury had put in \$8 million dollars for reimbursement and we received \$2.4 because they capped it because of the cost. So it shows you the disparity. We are not getting the full reimbursement that we deserve.

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Number three, we opposed the 30 percent reduction in the bilingual education grant. For instance you see the influx of new students from Puerto Rico. Waterbury has 51 this week, new students and throughout Connecticut we are seeing more and more students, Latino and I think it contraintuitive to cutting this line budget item at this point especially for the urban areas who are serving these wonderful children.

Number four, love the fact that we are focusing on SEL, social motional learning. CABE has been participating in the collaboration with stakeholders and I think we are developing a policy and really moving towards the understanding how important social emotional learning as we heard from the parent from Brass City Charter how important it is to help all of our teachers and students understand that is foundational to learning.

Number five, very, very supportive of the efforts to recruit minority teachers and to really create a diverse teaching and administrative community in our districts. I know that we have had success in Waterbury with the Relay Program and the Grown Your Own and I think that is where we found out in many of our cities that we have a lot of paraprofessionals, we have a lot of substitute teachers that are close actually to getting their certification but they need that bump.

And if I may, I just want to put another hat on, I represent the Child Development Centers and you do have a testimony of Mary Cecchinato, who Representative McCarty knows and echoing the

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comments to please reinstate the \$2.7 million dollars, support parity with the School Readiness and the CDCs and to oppose the cuts to the afterschool program. So just keep in mind that the CDCs had not received an increase since 2015 so we might want to consider a COLA build into this whole thing so we are not here every, you know, some kind of a scale that we can count on. So thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you for that and I would love to build in a COLA [Laughter], that'll stay in more [Laughter]. But thank you, thank you for your testimony. Penny followed by Virginia and then after Virginia, Marianna Silva. Marianna Silva? Okay, great. Come on down. Go ahead.

PENNY MARZULLI: Madam Chairperson, my name is Penny Marzulli and I'm the Deputy CEO for Prospect Schools. I want to thank the Committee for hearing our testimony today.

More than six years ago, Prospect Schools was invited to Danbury to learn about the city and consider opening a public charter school there. At that time community leaders shared that they had invited us to Danbury because of reputation of our program and high performing schools. We've since spent years getting to know Danbury, it's families and their needs. In August 2017 we along with the local founding team submitted our Charter application. Nearly a year-and-a-half ago the Connecticut State Board of Education approved Danbury Prospect Charter School's application with high marks making our school one of only two to pass the rigorous bar that year. The Board commended us,

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in particular, for the community's strong support for the school, and for spending considerable time building relationships in Danbury.

Such addressing the questions that came up a little earlier, we are one of the two charter schools that was authorized by the State, there are no others currently authorized by the State Board of Education we are currently seeking funding to open in the fall, just as a clarification there.

Today, thousands of Danbury residents support our school and want it to open – in the last year alone, our supporter base grew by 3,500 members! And yet, despite that community support, and our preparedness to open Danbury Prospect has not received state funding. Despite Danbury's overwhelming need for seats, Danbury Prospect has not received state funding.

I'd like to tell you just a little bit about our school. When you walk into Danbury Prospect, you will observe the power, and I hope you will all visit, you will observe the power of diversity in action.

You will see students from different backgrounds sitting side-by-side their peers who don't look like them, learning under the guidance of a similarly diverse faculty body. We believe the bedrock of any successful school is strong, professional teachers. Our teachers will be highly skilled in their content areas, deeply engaged in our program design and able to meet the needs of a diverse array of learners. We think a school like ours is uniquely suited to serve Danbury, one of Connecticut's most diverse

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cities. Building a school like Danbury Prospect won't be new for Prospect Schools. We've more than a decade of experience building successful schools in Brooklyn, New York where we currently serve about 1,500 students and employ approximately 300 educators and staff members. We're deeply committed to fully diversified classrooms and knowing the positive impact that a diverse teaching body has on students we are proud that over 50 percent of our employees identify as people of color and our teachers speak 19 different languages across our schools. The factor of the matter is we are the only option currently on the table that can start relieving Danbury's crisis in seats this fall. We believe that the State should allocate funds to Danbury. It's the only large city in the State of Connecticut without a state funded charter school. We believe all families deserve choice but right now Danbury Schools are so overcrowded that many students and too often those most at risk are being left behind. Too many Danbury families aren't being given the kind of choice that they deserve to find the school that they would like.

I am here today to ask that the focus remain on the people who matter most in this work, the students, our children. We ask our Legislators to recognize that our school will help their youngest constituents, the children who are being left behind and underserve in overcrowded district schools. The children can't wait any longer. We desperately want to stop spending time advocating and start education. The children are the ones who deserve our time and our resources. Thank you very much for serving the families of Connecticut.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. We understand the difficulties you guys are going through right now, so thank you. Next, Virginia DeLong. After Virginia, Mariann Silva, and after Mariann, Krista Pisano, is Krista Pisano here. Is Krista Pisano here? Okay, is Steve Tracy here? Good, okay. Go right ahead.

VIRGINIA DELONG: Good evening, my names is Virginia DeLong. I am a school counselor and I am Chairman of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut School Counselors Association. I am grateful for the opportunity to share in regards to HB-5005.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association is a professional organization representing the state's more than 1,400 school counselors while promoting leadership and advancing the professional school counseling identity. There is a drastic need in our State to provide all of our students K-12 with access to a school counselor. Unfortunately at this time all of our students do not have access with less than 25 percent of our students actually having access to an elementary school counselor. In addition to this, because of the high case loads within the State one counselor to 466 students is the current ratio. Students at the middle school and high school levels also do not always have access to their school counselor. This is problematic because it then means that our students throughout Connecticut are not receiving equitable comprehensive school counseling services. These services include academic support, career advising and social emotional support.

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School counselors at all three levels are trained to identify the gaps that our students have through data collection and analysis. After identifying what the student needs are school counselors use that information to develop classroom lessons that are delivered to all students at the Tier 1 level, develop small group curriculum for students at the Tier 2 level and where necessary provide Tier 3 instruction to students who may need more one-on-one attention over a short period of time. We work to support students academically collaborating with staff to determine what services need to be provided to meet the needs of the student and to help them to be academically successful. Starting very early on in elementary school, school counselors provide lessons in the academic and social emotional domains but also start working with students on career development which is instrumental in helping students to develop career paths that are best suited for them and that can also help work force development within Connecticut. Counselors are spending more and more time meeting the social needs of our students.

The CDC just reported that the rate of suicide is up 76 percent over the last decade within the 10 to 24-year old age group. We are seeing an increasing in anxiety and depression diagnoses with our students as well as a rise in special ed referrals. School counselors are trained to recognize mental health concerns with our students, provide short-term counseling and regular check-ins with students who need it and to work to provide preventative services within the classroom to all students. School counselors are vital to the everchanging landscape of education.

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In conclusion, the bottom-line is we need more school counselors in our school. Despite the importance of the work that we do with our students in our schools when it comes time for districts to determine where cuts are going to be made, school counselors are the first to be cut. We have a lot of ideas on how we can fund school counselors in our school and we would like to talk with the Appropriations Committee at another time and the Education Committee on how we can make this happen. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Thank you for your testimony, we appreciate it. Questions or comments? Seeing none, thank you very much for coming up, we appreciate it. Marianna Silva followed by Krista Pisano. Hi.

MARIANNA SILVA: Hi, how is everybody. So my name is Marianna Silva. I am a parent and I am also a board member of Brass City Charter School. So I just wanted to say thank you for having me tonight and having this opportunity to talk.

My daughter who is now 12, began at Brass City Charter School when they first opened. I learned about the school through a little ad in the newspaper and decided that, you know, she was going into first grade, we had been at a parochial. The district school in which we were living wasn't doing so well so I decided, I'm going to give this a chance. And since that time, we have come to just fall in love with this school. And I also now have a five-year-old who is a kindergartner in there as

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well. So I just wanted to, you have my formal testimony but I really wanted to talk a little bit about what it means for us that this \$4 million dollars was cut out of the budget this year and one of the things that comes up for me, when I think about that it is how much we are at risk of having to deviate from our mission, having to take away from the programs and opportunities that are children who are really compromised, the population is really made up of are underserved, low-income, a lot of Black and Latino and minority families.

You heard earlier from folks from our school and also others about the importance of social emotional learning in our schools just in general and I wanted to bring up a quick fact that I found out in a 2015 study from Columbia University that found that for every dollar a school spends on social emotional learning programs they receive a \$11 dollar return on investment which equals 1000 percent ROI which I think is pretty incredible. So our schools deserve equal funding and we can't rely solely on community funding and grants and fundraising to make up for what we are losing from the State. Our kids lose what was promised them when we opened and some of the things that come to my mind is our music program which is a extraordinary opportunity for kids to be able to have music and not just music, its citizenship, its arts that's tied into every single day. So we follow this extended day program so our kids get these extra hours. They learn all about being able to express themselves, being able to communicate with others, being able to be self-learners and independent and this program is really helping to shape them into being good human beings which is think most people would agree is one of the

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wonderful things that our schools can do for our kids as they grow-up. So I guess in short, thanks for having me up here. I really hope that you will be thinking about our Charters as you are going into this new budget and giving us the opportunity to have equal funding online with others throughout the State. Thanks, everybody.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Thank you, thanks for taking the time to come up here and testify. Questions or? Yes, sir Representative.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, thank you for your testimony. I just have a few questions being that you are on the Board. My first question is how much money does your school get per pupil?

MARIANNA SILVA: So we got about \$11,250.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): And do you get a match or any supplemental money from your municipality?

MARIANNA SILVA: No money from our district.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): And my last question is, sorry, I wrote them down, do they get money from the Low Income and ELO weights at your school?

MARIANNA SILVA: No, we don't get any extra for weights and we also don't get any for construction of facilities as well, so if you ever want to talk to me about the elevator issue, I would be more than happy to.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, I just wanted to get that on the record, thank you very much.

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MARIANNA SILVA: Of course. Thank you again.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Don't go so fast, Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Ms. Silva thank you very much for your testimony and for coming all the way up here and advocating for the Charter School and continued success to your daughter and now I guess there is a new one?

MARIANNA SILVA: Yeah, there is a new one.

REP. REYES (75th): Well congratulations, you hit lottery twice, congratulations.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Any other questions or comments? Thank you again for taking the time to come up here, it's really important. Krista Pisano. No? Steve Tracy followed by Cathy Battista.

STEVE TRACY: Thank you, Representative Abercrombie, Representative Walker good to see you again and Members of the Committee. My name is Steve Tracy, I am a lifelong public school teacher and leader having served as the Superintendent of Schools in the Town of New Milford, the City of Derby and also for the Department of Children and Families and I am here today to ask you to find the room to support the Danbury Prospect Charter School in your upcoming budget so that this school can get open.

When I was invited to join the Danbury Prospect Board a couple of years ago, I took the time to do

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some reading, look at the test scores, talk to some colleagues that knew the work that this group had done in New York City and went down to talk to teachers and students in their schools in Brooklyn and I came away very impressed, that's why I am here.

Since our Charter application was approved about a year-and-a-half ago thousands of Danbury parents have expressed their support for what we are doing and their encouragement. I encourage you to fund the Danbury Prospect Charter School in the coming year for these reasons: First of all this is not an experiment. As was stated by earlier testimony the Prospect folks have been working in Brooklyn for over 10 years. They're using the International Baccalaureate Program which those of you who are familiar with schooling will know that is a highly acclaimed and challenging curriculum not only across this country but beyond.

Second, we are committed in Danbury to serving a diverse group of students with an equally diverse faculty and that has been the case currently in Brooklyn, so I know they are going to do it.

Third, the Prospect Schools continue to deliver results for students. You can look at the test scores out of New York State, take with the 1,500 families who have entrusted their children to those schools in Brooklyn or the 10,000 families that are on waiting lists in Brooklyn to get into Prospect Schools.

Forth and this is important to me as a school superintendent we are committed to working as a

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partner with the Danbury Public School System and we have said that repeatedly from the beginning. We think we can work closely with the Danbury Schools on issues like constructional improvement, professional development, further diversification of the staff and also this issue of overcrowding that many of you are aware of that is afflicting the students and teachers in Danbury. In fact on that point, a Connecticut philanthropist has generously offered to fund the building that Danbury Prospect will operate in and that means hundreds of students who would otherwise be subjected to overcrowding will have a place to learn. So, a lot to like here, we pay competitive compensation to teachers and we think we will offer an excellent public school of choice in Danbury. We hope you can find a way to say yes. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Let me understand. Now Prospect does not have an open school in Danbury right now but they are trying to open one?

STEVE TRACY: Right, they have four functioning public charters in Brooklyn and they've got a Charter for their school in Danbury but it has yet to open and what's standing between us and that is getting into the State budget.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, thank you. Any other questions or comments? No. Thank you, sir. And thank you for waiting to testify.

STEVE TRACY: My pleasure. Name of the game up here.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): [Laugh]. Cathy Battista. Okay, after Cathy, Jamilah and after Jamilah, Patrice Farquharsen from West Haven, Child Development. No, okay. All right, go right ahead.

CATHY BATTISTA: Good evening everybody, glad to be here and see familiar faces. I want to just make you smile quickly because of all the wonderful speakers before me, look how much stuff I've crossed off [Laughter]. So I can really know, just say, what she said, what he said. Okay and I know as a former city councilman at the local level what a challenge this is for you all and I get that. So I'm just gonna kinda talk in bullet points for you. Right, I was getting to that.

My first bullet, my name is Cathy Battista, I am the President of the Connecticut Family Resource Center Alliance and also a Director of two family resource centers in Meriden, Connecticut and I am happy to be there. So very often we get asked what do we do because it sounds like family resource center all we do is hand out brochures. We do not and most of you are familiar with what we do and I need to emphasize somethings, like I said in bullet point kind of things.

What do we do, we have seven required components I am going to emphasize mainly one of them and that is families in training. That is our biggest focus. We have now 57 family resource center sites in the State of Connecticut. We had, two years ago 74 so we did take a major hit but it was necessary because of the budget and we understand that, we definitely understand that. But what has happened now is we have reached a precarious point with this program

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statewide and that is that we lost families, we cannot get these families back on the money we have and it's a challenge and we have always been able to do things on very little money but this has put us, you know, in that position. I'm gonna give you one example of a funding thing. Our grant is \$100,000 dollars a site. We are required by the grant to have a person with a master's degree be the administrator and a person with a bachelor's degree to be the site coordinator. You do the math and I say with all due respect that is all you have, you know, money wise for that.

So I want to go to the next thing which is with the latest things that are going on in our country, in every state, trauma informed, trauma sensitive schools are very important and one of our things probably the most important thing is that we are located in the schools. So when you leave tonight remember the words, "babies in the schools" because that is what we do. We bring babies with their parents into the schools so right there they have access to just about everything you can think of. That was quick, any questions?

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you very much [Laughter] that was like wow. Okay, I love Connecticut the family resource centers. We know how important they are and they do a fantastic job so I like it especially when you partner with the adults eds. That is even better. So Any questions or comments? No.

REP. ABERCROMBIE (83RD): Like she could say no to me. Hi, thank you so much for being here and more importantly thank you for staying on as President

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over the Family Resource Centers. We know there's been some changes going on there over the last few years and I'm glad you're back there cause they really need that stability within the group. So thank you for that. And also thank you for the connection between the mental health portion and our students, right. So I know in Meriden you have a close relationship with child guidance which is our mental health, right and I think that is the piece that people don't always understand about Family Resource Centers, right is that connection in the community. So thank you for being here and thank you for all you do.

CATHY BATTISTA: And that reminds me also to mention that we're also part of the Two Gen Initiative and that is really key with dealing with the whole family cause that is what we do, the whole family and one of our ultimate goals is to get families on the tax rolls, empower them to get jobs.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Have a good evening. Oh, yes.

REP. CURREY (11TH): No question for you I just want to say thank you. Meriden has been a shining example of what Two Gen truly was intended to do and you all did it even through kind of the craziness we went through with the funding and the way in which it kind of has all shifted but you guys really took it upon yourselves to really embody what they really meant and I think it is paying off dividends in your communities. So thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Have a good evening, thank you. Jamilah Prince Stewart and after Jamilah, Patrice

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Farquharson, is there a Patrice, no? Okay. Susan Radway, Susan Radway? Okay, Michelle Lindsay. Okay, great. Good evening.

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: Good evening Chairwoman Walker, Ranking Members Formica and Lavielle and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Jamilah Prince Steward and I am the Executive Director of Faith Acts for Education in Bridgeport where Representatives Rosario, Baker and Felipe all members of this Committee reside. I am also personally a constituent of Representative Porter who is also a member of this Committee and I am pleased to be joined and to save you time by being joined by our Faith Acts founder and Senior Advisor Pastor McCollough. We are people of faith building power to get our children the education they deserve.

In five short years Faith Acts has grown from a few pastors in a room praying for inspiration to a large and growing membership organization. Today we represent 70 congregations in Bridgeport and beyond and we are growing across the State. We want to use our few minutes today to make one simple point. We have some serious concerns about the Governor's budget for this year but we are not here to talk to you about numbers. I know a lot of folks have and you know those numbers.

We are here to talk about justice, what justice means, what justice demands. Justice demands that every child no matter where they live, where their family is from, how much money they have, how they talk or what they wear, have the opportunity to attend a quality school and to attend and finish

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college. Justice demands that every child has the opportunity to grow up and care for their family, contribute to their community, pursue their dreams and reach their God given potential. The talk in this building today is about the budget deficit. But we have a much more serious deficit on our hands. We have a justice deficit. There is a justice deficit that when black, brown and low income kids don't receive the funding that they deserve to attend a quality school. There is a justice deficit when the government rations hope by cutting programs that help on those vulnerable kids develop into successful people we know they can be. There is a justice deficit when the state government perpetuates a world where choice and opportunity are made easily available to people with means but taken away from people who cannot afford tuition payments, of higher housing costs or property taxes.

We come together in rooms like this all the time and say that we care about low income kids of color but these numbers tell a different story, a story of continued injustice that will make life harder for these kids. Honored members of this Committee you will deliberate these serious policy decisions and you will have to ask yourselves a lot of questions. Please don't forget this question, will this close the justice deficit in our State? Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Pastor would you like to say, at least state your name [Laughter]. I know Jamilah didn't leave you a long time, go ahead.

PASTOR WILLIAM MCCOLLOUGH: That's all right. I'm Pastor William McCollough the founder of Faith Acts for Education and Pastor of Russel Temple Church in

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Bridgeport, Connecticut.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Watch this one. Representative Felipe I think wants to say something, I'm not even looking at him, I'm just looking straight at you, but I know that he has his head and face over towards me, going, um-hum, go ahead.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, just a comment not even a question. First of all those were some powerful words that you just said. I thought Pastor McCollough was gonna be the one holding court today.

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: I learned from the best.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): You did a great job and I just want to say thank you for everything you've done since I've been involved whether its being an activist in education or being in the political spectrum I know that Pastor McCollough has really been there the entire time, Faith Acts has been there and you guys really fight for all 100 percent of our kids in the City of Bridgeport and that is something that means so much to me because, you know, it's not about one group of kids versus another, we're not pitting 'em against each other, we're all together in this and you guys really do a great job portraying that message so thank you. Thank you so much.

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: And what is so powerful is the story of the real parent. The real parent isn't just sending their kid to one school or the other school. Sometimes we have kids that send their kids

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to a Magna School and a Charter School, or a traditional public school and home school one kid. So this is really about what is serving kids best and what we see in this budget, we're gutted on both ends, quality opportunities is on one end in terms of seats for additional charters and growth for those kids gutted but we are also gutting turnaround options for traditional public schools. We got 22,000 kids in Bridgeport, right, about 2,000 of them go to charters, right. We need to make sure those opportunities expand and we need to make sure that traditional public schools receive the funding they deserve to be able to serve all our kids. We reject any dichotomy, we're willing and ready and hope that you are too to serve all kids in Connecticut.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Talk about it. Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Let's see, Representative Rosario. [Laughter]

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, thank you for coming. I had the opportunity to meet with you earlier in my office today and I just want to publicly for the record state thank you, thank you, thank you for all the work that you do. You truly are on the front lines and you are a voice for many parents who don't have a voice. So I just want to publicly thank you all. You can count on me, I'm in your corner and I thank you for coming up to Hartford to testify.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and Representative Baker.

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REP. BAKER (124TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to say thanks and echo a little bit of what my colleagues said. You're doing an excellent job in terms of empowering the people in the City of Bridgeport to come together and really give them understanding of the educational system and the dollars in a sense so also getting them to be involved and that is the most important thing and as they begin to teach their kids and I really appreciate Faith Acts, what you have done and also holding us accountable in many ways, many, many ways. I have a question for you and I don't want to really put you too much on the spotlight, but if we can probably have this dialogue later, there was, a while ago, there was some discussion about a regionalization type of funding things and I never got a chance to actually ask you about that, like a field county type of region, what are your thoughts on that, if you could just elaborate on that?

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: When we look at the population of students that we serve in Connecticut we serve about the entire student body across the State, the size of LA Unified School District, right. So that is one school district in the State of California. We have made the decision to divide those students up over 169 times and often those decisions are based on race, and based on class, and segregate families, communities, people across the State. So we are telling 169 different stories in the State of Connecticut of how we want to serve kids. And we know who that hurts most and so whether it is a specific policy about regionalization of a continued conversation about a unified funding formula we have to start thinking

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about Connecticut as a whole State because when Bridgeport suffers, Fairfield suffers. When Hartford suffers so does West Hartford, right and we're one State and when we're not investing in the workforce in Bridgeport, Hartford, Connecticut, Waterbury, Danbury we are not investing in the workforce of the entire State. And it is morally wrong but it is strategically wrong and we are economically suffering which is why we're also expanding across the State as well. So in terms of the specific policy we would be open to a policy that addresses treating all kids equitably across the state regardless of the type of public school they attend and where they reside and where they attend a school.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Would you be opposed to havin a county regionalization, so a formula that addresses by county, would you be opposed to that?

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: We would not be opposed to that and we would not be willing to take that off of the table, I think the question will still remain do we get equity with that process so we would definitely want to look at making sure that whether it is regionalization, whether it is a county regionalization or whether again it is a unified funding formula that equity is at the forefront of the policy and how we are actually treating kids.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Well thank you for coming out here this evening and keep up the good work.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I just want to say that Jamilah first got her influence from a Pastor a longtime ago when she was a little girl in a program that I used

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to run, my dad ministered there and Jamilah used to come and hang out in his office all the time and I am so proud of you for what you are doing and your commitment and I know my daddy would be real proud of you right now.

JAMILAH PRINCE STEWART: Thank you and God bless him and God bless your family.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you guys, have a good evening. Patrice, I don't think Patrice every showed up so we're gonna go to Michelle Lindsay. Did Susan Radway come? No. Okay, Jessica Martinez, Jessica Martinez is she here? Oh, that's you. Good. Okay after Jessica, Cathy Vanicky. Is Cathy Vanicky here? Okay. Go right ahead. Press that microphone, go ahead.

MICHELLE LINDSAY: My name is Michelle Lindsay, good evening Members of the Appropriations Committee. I am a grandmother of three public charter school students. They attend Achievement First Schools in Bridgeport and New Haven. I live in Bridgeport.

I am here today to ask the Committee to put back the money meant for Connecticut's public charter school students. Right now my grandchildren and their classmates do not receive funding based off of what they need as students. Instead they are shortchanged because of the type of public school they choose to attend. Our students deserve to be treated equally. We should not cast them aside in order to balance the state budget. These students are more than deserving of equitable funding. They are overcoming stereotypes every day as they continue to excel in their charter school classrooms

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Growing up in Bridgeport, I had a difficult life, one that I do not wish to see my grandchildren live anew that I won't talk about today because today is about our kids. I am a praying Grandmother, and a woman of faith and for that reason I believe that those in state leadership will do right by our children. I guess I need to pray harder, because recently I wrote to the State Board of Education upon the renewal of my grandkids schools, asking them for a full five year renewal but the school was only given a two year renewal with probation. With decisions like this, our school, excuse me, decisions like this not to fund our children based off what they need, what message are we sending to our kids? Is the message that their hard work and efforts don't matter? That the very schools that are closing the educational gap should continue to be treated like the stepchild of school in Connecticut. Our kids need to feel that they are being supported as they continue to grow and exceed academic expectations! But the message they are getting is that it really doesn't matter how well they do. They and their schools will continue to be treated as less than, that their hard work and achievements are just not enough. This generation is watching us all very carefully. What legacy do we want to leave for them? Mine will be that I left it all on the line to fight for those who are underserved. What will yours be? Stand with us, support what is working for our kids. Our families and children thank you in advance for being bold and supporting our kids. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you so much and thank you so much for coming to testify. We see a lot of grandparents who have been put into a new role and I

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appreciate all that you do for your children, because I know that's got to be hard. So thank you and thank you for coming here to advocate for them to. Representative Baker.

REP. BAKER (124TH): I just want to also thank you for coming out here and at home. You know, one of the things I have been trying to work with in terms of the grandparents, cause I know you make a whole lot of sacrifices in terms of you reached the point in your life where you've taken care of your kids and now the responsibility spins on you and we have to do better in terms of being able to continue to provider the services for you so that you can take care of your grandkids and give them the education so thank you for what you do.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Representative Felipe.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I get the list of the people we have comin in to testify and when I have Bridgeport folks I like to put a little star next to it and there are a lot of stars on his list today and I just want to say thank you to each one of you for comin out, thank you Michelle for coming all the way from our district to come down and fight for your babies, your grandbabies. I know that, you know, when you are at home you're fightin for 'em, up here fightin for them and that is a very tremendous job that you're doing, so thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm

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gonna be brief. I just want to say that your grandbabies are blessed, really blessed to have you in their lives because it's not easy to advocate and come all the way from Bridgeport to Hartford to fight for them. That is your love and dedication for them. I just want to say thank you so much.

MICHELLE LINDSAY: Thank you, they are my babies.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, have a good evening. Thank you. Jessica. After Jessica, I am going to try one more time for Cathy Vanicky, is she here? No. Mary Cecchinato from Torrington Child Care. No. Aidee Nieves, okay she's after. Go right ahead.

JESSICA MARTINEZ: Good evening, Madam Chair Walker and the Members of this important, very important Committee to me. First of all I want to apologize for a very lengthy speech. I respect time, cut me off as you need to. [Laughter]

My name is Jessica Martinez, I'm a Bridgeport parent leader, the Chair of the Bridgeport Board of Education and the Chair of the Bridgeport Board of Education Finance Committee. I have been serving my community since 2011. Tonight, I am here in support of equity and fair funding, in education for all students and all schools across Connecticut but especially in Bridgeport. I urge this committee today to put the interests of all our children at the top of their priority list, just as you did last year. As a parent first and foremost I support choice in education, as an Elected Leader I stand for all children and all parents in my city, the City of Bridgeport, including parents who exercise

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choice in their sons and daughters education. All voices matter, and in my capacity as a Board of Education Member I make it a priority to fight for everyone.

Although I wear many hats, my first hat is being a mom and the subject of the education budget hits home for my son and I. My son, Jose Martinez is now a sophomore at Bassick High School in Bridgeport. He had the privilege of attending Notre Dame where we were setting him up for not only college readiness but also access. As a single mom, that school of choice was no longer affordable. At Bassick we have a hard working and caring staff, however, the challenges we face as a district and city creates many obstacles for the future of my son. We ask that members of the Appropriations Committee be supportive of the traditional public and public charter school students in the budget they are putting out this season. The Governor's budget state charter school cuts will unfairly impact many of Connecticut's highest need students.

I love my city and want to share some general information about Bridgeport's schools and I have it here, I'll pass it out because I probably don't have time to speak. Bridgeport is in the lowest level on the economic scale among all school districts in Connecticut. Bridgeport has the second highest enrollment among Connecticut school districts. Bridgeport has high enrollment of the neediest students in special education and English language learner students and it is rapidly growing. Bridgeport is grossly underfunded, in comparison to its peer districts and I don't understand it. But I thank you, Representative Currey because what you

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stated brought joy to my heart because I have been fighting for that ESC formula change for a very long time.

Bridgeport is underfunded by \$20.1 million dollars for each \$1,000 dollars in NCEP it does not receive. If Bridgeport were equitably funded with Hartford, as an example, Bridgeport's budget would rise by \$103.5 million dollars. We thank you for producing 73.6% of our budget, however, in the last 4 years we have had an astronomical reduction of \$44.11 million dollars in our operating budget. For the school year 2020-2021, we are in need of at least \$7 more million dollars from the State in order for us not to make any more cuts. We are all facing challenges. Our Public Charter Schools are facing even more deficits to operate. I have had the pleasure and immense satisfaction of witnessing tremendous academic achievement of scholars who attended and currently attend public charter schools. As the Board of Education liaison for Capital Preparatory Harbor School there is an interesting and celebratory fact I would love for you to hear. Prior to Thanksgiving of 2019 all 40 Seniors at Capital Prep, that attend Capital Prep had college acceptance letters and not only did all 40 have college acceptance letters, eight of those 40 had full rides. This is my vision for ALL students in Bridgeport. It is very lengthy. I will stop right there. You have my testimony. I have some more Bridgeport talking points about our district. Can I hand them.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Trust me, Bridgeport legislators will had it out, all of that [Laughter] and then some. Please hand it out. Thank you.

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Thank you for your testimony. But before you say anything could your son please introduce himself?

JOSE MARTINEZ: I am Jose Martinez.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And what school do you go to?

JOSE MARTINEZ: Bassick High School.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And what grade are you in?

JOSE MARTINEZ: I am a sophomore in 10th grade.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And what's your, what do you study? What's your interest?

JOSE MARTINEZ: I want to go to school for business.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You gonna have your own business?

JOSE MARTINEZ: Yeah.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Well, the gentleman who sits over here, Mr. Formica, Senator Formica, Senator Formica I should say, when he comes back I want you to talk to him because he runs a business too and he can give you some good tips, okay.

JOSES MARTINEZ: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): All right, go right ahead. You had something else to say?

JESSICA MARTINEZ: No, I appreciate your time.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): We would all love to be funded like Hartford, okay [Laughter].

JESSICA MARTINEZ: I want to work with Representative Currey, he seems to me, he's gonna be, there's gonna be, you know. I don't understand the difficulty. I am the Chair of the Finance so I understand the difficulties of having to appropriate and like seriously putting things where they belong when you're provided with what you're provided with, right, but I mean it should be simpler to create and equal. Now what we do need, what we do need to fight for is for our cities to also properly fund us so that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You're asking a lot [Laughter].

JESSICA MARTINEZ: Well if our cities properly fund us then this State will have less to have to worry about but.

REP. WALKER (93RD): But I have a feeling they are going to say to us, you get a choice. You get the city or the education.

JESSICA MARTINEZ: Right, but we thank you for the 73.3 percent that you do provide and I know that my Representatives work very, very hard and our Senators work very, very hard for us. I've worked along side of them for quite some time but I am here as a partner and I've been doing this for quite some time so until there is change, you will see this face.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and we appreciate you coming up. And Senator Formica just sat down so if

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he has a change I'm sure he would love to talk. This young man wants to own his own business so is volunteered you to talk to him about business ownership.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I would be delighted to do so at any time you like.

JOSE MARTINEZ: Thank you.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I will give you my card.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good evening. Oh, sorry, Representative Rosario. You've been talking a lot, I thought you had spoken already [Laughter].

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank you Jessica and June, we call him Junie. We call him Junie back in Bridgeport. Thank you for coming. First of all I am going to express my condolences on the recent loss of your father, he was a great leader in our community, in the faith based community and he is going to be missed. Thank you for sharing him with us. But I also want to thank you and your son for your advocacy because this isn't your first rodeo. You'll go anywhere, you've gone to Washington, D.C., you've gone to the Capital here in Hartford and if you've got to go to the moon to advocate for kids, you will go to the moon. So I just want to say thank you so much and you could always count on me to support you.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Jessica it is a pleasure to always see you and we worked together thousand times on different things

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and I have a question for you. You know, I know it's a hard thing that you're doing in terms of workin with the charter schools and servin as the President of the Board of Education, so I commend you for all the hits that you take. So question for you, would you be opposed, and this is just me, I see that you've got your thinking cap on and brainstorming has been there, would you be opposed to takin charter school dollars and public and just meshing it all together?

JESSICA MARTINEZ: If it creates equity, absolutely not. If that means that per pupil, I would need more information on how that would look like, but if that means per pupil there would be equal amount of dollars per student. Yes, see charter school students are no different than Bassick high school students, right. We are serving Bridgeport children. The charter schools around Connecticut, New Haven, Waterbury we are serving children so it's not difficult to work and support school of choice and work on the charter side and also be the Chair of the Bridgeport Board of Education because I'm fighting for our future, I am fighting for children. When we're talking about education there should be no obstacle. You know, many of our elected officials and I am not knocking anybody here, but they send their children to private school. I had the opportunity to send my child to private school temporarily and this is what I want, access and if we had that choice and if we had that access to quality, then there would be no obstacle for our children's futures. The color, we know that race and dollars has everything to do with everything but it should not be a barrier because our children are just as smart and our parent leaders and our leaders

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and our residents are just as hardworking. We just face challenges others hide.

REP. BAKER (124TH): Well, thank you for comin out here as you always do fighting for the children, not just primarily for Bridgeport but for children as a whole for the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Felipe.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you Jessica for your testimony. And you know how I feel about you, but I want to talk about Junie for a second. Junie is somebody who I've had the pleasure of having him work with me when I've done stuff over the summer and this is a kid like me and some of my colleagues that sit from urban areas on this Committee is really succeeding despite the system that he is in and really doing a tremendous job of, you know, becoming a really a leader as a young man and I want to thank you for that. But I have an ask of you. You said you want to open your own business.

JOSE MARTINEZ: Yea.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): I ask that you try to open that business in Bridgeport and share your story and you make sure that story is told to other kids that are like you that are going through that system in the future so that we can break that cycle because you're gonna be a big part of this while we're fighting and bring stories like yours to really break the cycle that we've in. So think about doing that.

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JOSE MARTINEZ: There is no place that I would rather put my business at.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Love to hear it.

JESSICA MARTINEZ: And he is currently in an entrepreneurship program so hopefully that is soon. I thank you so much, I won't take up any more of your time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wait a minute. Representative Currey.

JESSICA MARTINEZ: I want to work with him.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You have praised him so much he's got to say something [Laughter].

REP. CURREY (11TH): I am happy to have you be part of this fight. It is actually quite simple to get this done and it takes an investment from the State to get this done, we have a formula, this is just a matter of finishing the job for a fair funding for all regardless of the type of public school system you are in. So join the fight.

JESSICA MARTINEZ: I'm joining you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, have a good evening. Aide Nieves. Claudia Phillips, okay. Eileen Melody, okay. All right go right ahead.

AIDEE NIEVES: Good evening, members. Good to see you too Representative Walker. Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee, and thank you for your time this evening. My name is Aidee

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Nieves, I am the City Council President for the City of Bridgeport. I serve the 137th district and I just so happen to be represented by all three of the State Reps sitting here that represent Bridgeport. They all represent my district, the 137th. In addition to that, I am a parent in the City of Bridgeport.

I come in here every time, I remember the first time I walked into this room when my son was in kindergarten, he attended New Beginnings Family Academy and we were here asking for funding for them, so I have been here quite a few times. Sitting in this room before, sitting in the back with a t-shirt on and now I'm sitting here before you as an advocate and as an elected official so just shows what one moment of interest in advocacy can do to your life.

I want to begin again by thanking the caucus for their leadership and I'm also here to encourage you as committee members to redouble your efforts to ensure that our state residents and particularly our highest need communities receive the resources and support they so desperately need through the public education budget. Today I am here speak on an issue that I believe is at the root cause of most of today's social ills in urban centers, that is inadequate and under resourced public education for Connecticut's black and Latino children. As Council President, I have a responsibility to all students regardless of the type of public school they attend or where their parents chose to send them. I fight every day as a leader in my city to serve our most low income and disadvantaged families and children. I know as this Committee aims to do

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the same yet, I am disheartened to see in the Lamont Administration's new budget does not fully support our city. I saw they made cuts to the budget for our public charter schools so our public charter students will remain severely underfunded. Charter schools are an important part of the choice available to students in Bridgeport. I do not want to see this administration balance the state budget on the backs of poor Black and Latino students. The power of a quality education is the greatest equalizer for our children, I see it every day and I can speak to that as a parent. Our home State of Connecticut continues to have the largest achievement gap in the country and has failed horribly in providing access to a quality education to our Black and Latino children. Our State's public charter schools overwhelmingly serve low-income students of color. But because of how Connecticut funds public education, the 10,000 low-income, predominantly black and Latino children are at risk of being profoundly underfunded.

I ask you really quickly to provide equity to our students in the City of Bridgeport that throughout the State of Connecticut and charter schools mostly. Districts require a lot of support and services so I can only tell you that, you know, recently what happened in our city in front of the court house speaks to the biggest gap that has happened between 1997 to present day where our children were pushed through the system, medicated and no supportive services allowed to them to support their educational needs. So I ask you to reconsider at look at what funding means in that \$4 million dollar cut to charter schools and allow parents to continue to have a choice to fight for their child's future.

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The rest of my testimony is submitted so I thank you for your time and for the record I just want to state that Counselman Brown could not be here even though his testimony is submitted due to a last minute emergency. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, don't go anywhere. You go a lot of people who got to say hello. Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam President of the City Council welcome to Hartford, thank you for your testimony. Thank you for all you've done for children across the City of Bridgeport and I just want to say I am immensely proud of you, I've seen your growth as a community advocate to becoming a public official and your rise to become the Council President, the first Latina counsel president in the State of Connecticut is history. I just want to say I'm proud of you, thank you and continue the good fight.

AIDEE NIEVES: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Baker. You didn't raise your hand? [Laughter]

REP. BAKER (124TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for comin out here and all that you do in the City of Bridgeport. You have a hard job to do and I appreciate continuing to work with you and to be able to provide the services for our kids. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Felipe.

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REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I also want to welcome you to Hartford. The first time I heard welcome to Hartford I was taking a lot of people up here with me and you are one of them. You are one of the people that made it possible for me to hear that on the first day I got here, so I want to thank you for that. I want to tell you that I am proud of the work that you are doing here, that you would come and support this movement that you guys have going with the charter schools and making sure that we get fair funding for our black and brown students because it is important to you, it is important to me and it is important to Bridgeport, to thank you so much.

AIDEE NIEVES: Thank you, very much for your time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Currey?
[Laughter]. Thank you, have a good evening. Next Claudia Philips. Eileen Melody, okay. Sarah Miller? Go right ahead.

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: Good Evening to the members of the Appropriations Committee and all those present this evening. My name is Claudia Phillips, I am a 17 year resident of Bridgeport, Connecticut and a mother of three. My daughters and son have all attended traditional, magnet and public charter schools in our city of Bridgeport.

I come before you in utter shock and disbelief at the Lamont Administration's proposal to cut funding from the very schools who are consistently closing the achievement gap in underserved communities like mine. These public charter schools are already severely underfunded and struggling to keep their

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doors open. These are schools serving our most poor and disadvantaged. Is this administration really proposing to balance their state budget by taking away a lifeline from struggling Black and Latino families like mine? If this is allowed, where do we draw the line? Everyone talks about closing the educational gap in communities like mine, including this administration, yet they are proposing to take away \$4 million dollars from the very schools who are in fact, successfully closing that educational gap? This sounds more to me like they want to continue supporting systematic oppression, keeping our communities poor, uneducated, weak and at risk. Why else would they want to take away from schools that are successfully educating our Black and Latino children? Our kids are shattering expectations, tearing down disgusting stereotypes that have been imposed by those that want to keep minorities oppressed. Many members of this Committee are as proud of these kids as I am and fight for them every day. So why would the Lamont Administration take away instead of increasing much needed financial support for these public charters? You really need to think about that.

You have heard me talk about my twin daughters and son, they are my pride and joy. Isabella and Lauren are currently in their 3rd year of college at Boston College and Bucknell University. My son Ethan is a senior at Amistad High School in New Haven. He struggled with learning disabilities throughout his time in school, but thanks be to God and the opportunity to attend Achievement First he has now received seven acceptance letters to college. The Phillips family is not one of means and neither are the other families who send their kids to these

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schools. But what we together are is a fiercely determined community and we are not going to sit back while our kids continue to be hurt by elected leaders who claim to support them, while ignoring the crisis our youth lives every day. Just last week another 18-year old was being mourned in our city. What if his life was different? What if elected leaders and each and every one of us, valued him so much, and poured into him so much, that his story would be one of triumph and inspiration and not what it is today another headstone with yet another life cut short? This Committee fought very hard for us last year. Our sons and daughters, our mothers, father, grandmothers, everyone in our communities, we cannot begin to thank you for your bold determination to do right by our kids. Today we ask you again to lock arms with us one more time and protect our kids by supporting the very schools that are changing their lives and our communities. I ask that you say no to any cuts to charters and I just want to say thank you and God Bless you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and can I just say, that was an amazing speech, you did a great job. I can say one thing, Bridgeport is in the house tonight [Laughter] there is no question about it. Thank you all for coming and lock arms and you know what, lock arms with New Haven, lock arms with Meriden, lock arms with Waterbury. We all need this change, so thank you very much for your testimony. All right so let's rogue on, who's goin first? Nobody? Porter, go ahead.

REP. PORTER (94TH): I'm not from Bridgeport but I've stomped hard enough in Bridgeport that people thought I moved from Bridgeport to New Haven, so I

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am going to claim the Port today. As a mother, I am practically speechless behind what you just said. You definitely stirred my soul. Bridgeport is blessed to have you fighting and doin what you're doin. What you just delivered was so eloquent and passionate and it is what we need in this building cause some folks need to be woke-up because our people are being left behind and there is nothin like havin to experience the life that are lived in many communities that look like Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford and you delivered tonight and I thank you for your patience. I thank you for hanging in here. You are up here every year doing this. When you walked up here I was like, okay she's been here before but you need to be here and it's something that needs to be belabored. So continue to fight the good fight, I'm proud of you. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Representative Felipe.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. In your testimony you spoke about your son Ethan. I know Ethan, I love and respect Ethan. You spoke about his learning disability. I have two questions on that, one is did he go to a traditional public school before he went to a charter school?

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: He did, he attended Thomas Walker which is our neighborhood school. I'd been advocating for him to get services, evaluated from the time he was five years old and it wasn't until mid-year of the fourth grade that I finally got somebody to listen to me but the following year he actually joined his sisters at Achievement First and

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it was lifechanging.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): And what were the differences in the type of care that he received and the attention to his learning disability between the schools.

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: When he came to Achievement First at that point he did have services. There was a meeting for the evaluation but I think that the biggest thing that happened at the school was the culture of excellence. I'll never forget when one of his math teachers looked at him when we went for report care conference and said, "I see a future engineer in you Ethan" and the way that his eyes just opened up and it's just that belief and this is what are kids need to hear, they need to hear people that believe in them that are planting those seeds of excellence not just us as a family but everyone believing in them because they have all the potential in the world, it just needs to be a culture where they are supported in the way that I see Achievement First doing it for me, for my children. But I would want that for every child in our City of Bridgeport.

REP. FELIPE (130TH): Well I hope he sees this and I hope he is immensely proud of his mom, you did a great job. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, are there any other? Yes, Representative Rosario.

REP. ROSARIO (128TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Claudia, welcome. (Speaking Spanish). I just want to thank you because Claudia's passion that she is

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giving here tonight for her children, for all children is the same passion that she gives to every single person in the City of Bridgeport whether it is community in need, a family in need Claudia is there. She is always as we say, "presente" and I know that you are originally from Los Angeles and we hear stories of, my travels to California, but I'm just say I am proud to have you in the City of Bridgeport and the State of Connecticut.

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: An I am proud of your leadership and all of the Bridgeport delegation and all of you that are fighting for our families thank you so much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wait, da, da, da.
Representative Kokoruda.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): Well it has been wonderful conversations tonight and of course to top it off with your, the speech you just gave was pretty amazing. Actually there were so many wonderful. Well there are some of us from other parts of the State that have ties to Bridgeport. I actually went to Blessed Sacrament Parish, Blessed Sacrament School. Kathleen went to St. Ann's and Sacred Heart University actually in Bridgeport was originally our high school and so it's, we have family there. We have wonderful stories of my mother and father were very involved with St. Charles Church there on Stillman Street.

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: I go there.

REP. KOKORUDA (101ST): I have such wonderful memories. When I came up to Hartford and really, I

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mean I still have ties with family in the area but when I saw what was happening in Bridgeport and then when this was handed out tonight, you're right, we do have to do something and it's just a shame the Park City was such a special place to grow up as a kid, got to get it back there for everyone. I had a conversation with one of the state reps a few years ago and he told me the level, now hopefully this is better now, of the level of reading at Bassick High School. I never got over it. I remember saying to him, if that was me I would be standing on my chair yelling. We have to change that and really to see that that is not what is being proposed in this budget is really unfortunate. I think we have heard tonight from so many people with ties that support you. I just want you to know there is others here that feel the same way.

CLAUDIA PHILIPS: I thank you and I do believe that united we can absolutely do it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative McCarty. Oh, you're just...okay. Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Eileen Melody and after Eileen, Sarah Miller, after Sarah, Jeff Shaw, after Jeff Shaw, John Cattelan. Oh, there they are, okay. Is Subria still here? Okay. Annette Armstrong still here? Annette Armstrong? Okay and Eliza Halsey. Oh, there you are, okay thanks. Okay, yes.

EILEEN MELODY: Well it is an honor to be with all these wonderful people from Bridgeport tonight who have just touched me as well. My name is Eileen Melody, and I am a seventh and eighth grade school counselor, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut School Counselor

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Association. We call ourselves CSCA. CSCA represents the 1400 school counselors in Connecticut. And thanks for the opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of school counseling and the need to strengthen and create funding pathways for additional school counseling positions in Connecticut.

Many people have stated tonight Connecticut has a history of having one of the largest achievement gaps, now defined by Senator McCrory as the opportunity gap. Recently Senator McCrory stated that half of Connecticut students can't read and do math at grade level by eight grade which in his words is "simply unacceptable." He also stated that one goal of the Education Committee is to strengthen social and emotional learning instruction. Lack of social and emotional skills and below grade level math and reading skills are barriers to students success in school and preparation for the workforce. A major function of the school counselor is to identify such barriers to student's success and to provide an equitable comprehensive school counseling program which focuses on providing all students, and I've heard a lot of people say that tonight, all students with academic workforce readiness and social emotional skills and knowledge. We guide students to the best fit for proposed secondary education and training for careers. We advocate for all students to feel supported and connected to at least one caring adult in the school building.

Research shows that when such a school counseling program is in place there is a decrease in suspensions, attendance is improved and there are higher graduation rates. Connecticut does not

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require public schools to employ certified counselors at any level. In the 206 districts in Connecticut, only 58 have elementary school counselors, 72 percent of districts have no comprehensive school counseling programs, services for students in grades kindergarten to six. Numerous studies demonstrate student engagement is determined by grade three. Early intervention by a school counselor can help students connect education to future goals and wellbeing.

The issues we now deal with include suicide, substance abuse, bullying, family trauma not to mention student anxiety which has been growing across all levels of education. I have research in my testimony regarding ratios and I know I'm running out of time here but let me go in closing so I am respectful of your time.

We respectfully ask that the Appropriations Committee support Connecticut school counseling by recognizing the value of school counseling and the indispensable benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program with appropriate ratios for all students in Connecticut as well as a counselor in every building. That is my dream. It is necessary to address these inequities in school counseling services and I thank you for your time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wait a minute before you leave, you are saying that I know that you are supposed to have a school counselor at each high school.

EILEEN MELODY: Supposed to but it is not law. It is not required.

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REP. WALKER (93RD): It is not in Statute?

EILEEN MELODY: No, it is not.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And there is no requirement for certification? Did I hear you say that?

EILEEN MELODY: We have, we are certified.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You are certified? I though you had said, that was me.

EILEEN MELODY: We have the #068 School Counselor Certification.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, okay. All right. You scared me. I was writing and I thought I heard you say that and I stopped writing.

EILEEN MELODY: No, it's a pretty heavy duty certification.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah it is, that's what I thought. Okay, well thank you. Any other questions or comments? Yes.

REP. CURREY (11TH): No I just want to say thank you cause I know that I've met with your organization a number of times to have this discussion and I think it is important that you all continue to have that hopefully one on one with legislators throughout this building to really show them what these numbers are and what this could potentially mean to their districts as far as getting in early and having these conversations.

EILEEN MELODY: We have met with you.

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REP. CURREY (11TH): Yeah, that unfortunately the teachers are being already asked to do a ridiculous amounts in their classrooms and this is just one more thing that they are taking on essentially they should not be and so to have that additional support in the schools would be a tremendous help to everybody so keep up the fighting [Cross-talking].

EILEEN MELODY: I appreciate that. Thank you for your time everyone.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, you have a good evening. Sarah and then Jeff, and then John Cattelan. Good evening.

SARAH MILLER: Hello. So my name is Sarah Miller. Good evening, Madam Chair and Members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify and thank you for your service. My names I Sarah Miller as I said and I am a lifelong resident of New Haven and I have two children, Pablo is eight and Tate is five. They are students in the New Haven Public Schools and I am here to comment on the proposed budget for public education.

Our school district has a severe and recurring budget deficit which has led to painful cuts to services that are essential to children's learning and development. The number of school librarians has been cut in half. There has been a dramatic cut in the number of school counselors and on and on. My children attend a neighborhood school and we love our school community but 500 kids have no stable afterschool programming, no technology teacher, no health teacher. Starting in the second grade there

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are 26 children in each classroom with no assistant. When supplies run out as they often do, our underpaid teachers and teacher aids buy art supplies and pencils and toilet paper out of their pockets. A family in our neighborhood recently moved to Woodbridge because their special needs child wasn't needy enough to qualify for services in New Haven. In Woodbridge she now has a fulltime aid but most families can't move to a wealthier district to get what their child needs and when children don't get what they need in first grade, and third grade and fifth grade it negatively impacts them forever. Multiple this by 20,000 kids each with unique needs and we have a collective problem.

Last year I participated in a committee of our school district that systematically reviewed our district's budget to look for cost savings we had expected to find a lot of frivolous spending. We found some, but the amounts were trivial and they were all removed. Through this process I learned something completely different namely that the dollars we receive from the State there are no correlation with the actual cost of educating children. The weights in the ECS formula do not come close to addressing the real costs associated with our large population of English learners and special education students which are astronomically higher than the dollars we receive. This baseline inadequacy is confirmed by the CCJEF Class Study which showed in 2014 that our public schools are in schools are under-funded by at least \$1.2 billion dollars statewide. When the CCJEF decision, the Supreme Court yielded to the legislature's decision-making authority to determine sufficiency. So we turn to you to approve a budget that reflects our

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needs and values and this is not it. When the Governor said in the State of the State address that the budget, "provides our teachers the resources they need to teach everything" he wasn't referring to New Haven. This budget gives New Haven an increase of just 1.5 percent with the level of inflation. This is how the poor stay poo. When I look at this budget I see the school to prison pipeline written in numbers. When you look around the country at what has transformed urban school districts, there is no big mystery, we know what works. The question always asked in terms of providing the resources we get the money but we are a rich state, there is money for the things we value, we find \$100 million dollars to give to the Dalia family for a private philanthropic project. We can't at the minimum fund our schools at the level reflected in the most recent cost study. Our kids deserve what are communities need it and we can stop the school to prison pipeline in its tracks with librarians and school counselors and supportive services. There is a better way and we can start by funding our schools. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Great job, Sarah. Tuft and thank you for your advocacy. Thank you for really hanging in there and keeping and learning cause I know you're doing a lot of studying and you are learning about the funding and everything and it's a long conversation. But I'm glad that you are participating, I am glad that you are actively advocating for change and it was great. I hope you had a chance to sort of grab cards from some of the Bridgeport people so that we can start doing lock arm with Bridgeport and maybe some other towns cause we had talked about that.

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SARAH MILLER: Yeah, thanks. Thanks for all your work.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And thank you. Any comment or questions? No, I think we're good. Thank you, thanks for staying too. Jeff.

JEFF SHAW: Good evening Representative Walker.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Pull the mic closer to you please. Thank you.

JEFF SHAW: Good evening, there it is, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and members of the Committee. My name is Jeff Shaw, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance. The Alliance is the statewide association of nonprofits in Connecticut. Community nonprofits deliver essential services to over half a million people each year and employ almost 12% of the workforce. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's budget proposal in this specific instance the Office of Early Childhood and State Department of Education.

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut. They support people in need, enrich our quality of life, and employ tens of thousands of people and you've heard from many of them earlier tonight.

Community nonprofits and the people they serve are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work. Community nonprofits and the people they

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serve have made substantial sacrifices during the past decade of State budget deficits. The 2020 Legislative Session provides a critical opportunity to begin to address the impact of this chronic underfunding and increase the stability of the nonprofit sector.

Connecticut's economy is finally on the road to recovery, as illustrated by the budget outlook which is the strongest it has been in over a decade. As Connecticut's projected surplus continues to grow, it is time to restore previous funding cuts and invest in the people served by community nonprofits.

So again, in the current fiscal climate I am here to respectfully request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million dollars over five years for community nonprofits.

As background, since 2007, 13 years ago, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million dollars in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services.

So please, commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, of inflation growth by Fiscal Year 2025.

Appropriate \$128 million dollars which is a net of \$67 million dollars in State appropriation after federal reimbursement in new funding Fiscal Year 2021, which would be a 7% increase.

In the Office of Early Childhood please support the Governor's proposal to increase funding for Birth to

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Three by \$3 million dollars. As we've heard before these services meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays and disabilities and their families. Increasing caseload growth will allow more children to receive these essential services. According to a recent OEC Annual Report, every dollar invested in Birth to Three saves the State \$12 per year and into future.

In the State Department of Education please oppose the Governor's proposed cut of \$500,000 for After School Programs. This funding is for important programs and vital services operated by Boys & Girls Village, the American School for the Deaf who you heard earlier and Neighborhood Youth Centers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Jeff and what was that number you want by 2025?

JEFF SHAW: \$461 million dollars again that is the total growth and inflation since 2007 the last time nonprofits received a rate increase and grant funds received adequate COLA.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

JEFF SHAW: Thanks for the opportunity.

REP. WALKER (93RD): John, after John, Subira. After Subira, Annette and after Annette, Eliza.

JOHN CATTELAN: Representative Walker and Members of

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the Appropriations Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening. My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCA's. The Alliance represents 21 YMCAs across the State of Connecticut. I am happy I didn't have to directly follow that wonderful lady from Bridgeport. In all my years up here, I think that was one of the best pieces of testimony I've ever heard. As much as I enjoy the company of these esteemed Members of this Committee I can't understand why I always draw such a poor number when I have to testify [Laughter].

I am here to comment tonight on Governor Lamont's proposed State Budget as it relates to the Office of Early Childhood. We strongly urge the restoration of the proposed \$2.7 million dollar cut to the Early Care and Education line item which funds school readiness. The budget cut represents the \$100 dollar increase for children partaking in School Readiness Program that was approved in last year's State Budget. Our Y Childcare Centers continue to face increased costs especially with the second installment of the minimum wage going into effect this year. We are unable to charge parents more, we don't want to, nor can we reduce our staff or our staff hours. We don't want to do that anyway but these are because of the laws and regulations in the State of Connecticut.

I am going to give you an example. The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA currently has about 275 children enrolled in School Readiness Programs in Bridgeport and New Haven. As it is, with just a \$100 dollar increase, they will receive an increase in funding of \$27,500 dollars. That is if the cut

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is rescinded. However the cost of a \$12 dollar minimum wage will cost our childcare centers in Bridgeport and New Haven \$125,000 dollars, the math simply doesn't work. And I know all the members of this Committee are aware of the benefits of Early Childcare and the challenges we all face as Early Childcare Providers. So I am going to actually ask for more money than that \$100 dollars that was cut because we need to balance our budgets and we need to provide quality care and protect these children.

Childcare is already unaffordable in the State of Connecticut and if the \$2.7 million dollar funding is restored it still doesn't address the issue of unaffordable childcare in the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and you are absolutely right, it doesn't cover. Any comments, questions? No. Thank you, thank you for staying. Subira.

SUBIRA GORDON: Hi, good evening.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good evening.

SUBIRA GORDON: Good evening Chairwoman Walker and other Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Subira Gordon and I am the Executive Director of ConnCAN. As education policy advocates we often discuss granular questions at length and broad questions. And I am sure you can relate that given you deal with the State Budget.

As we look at what we have before us today, there are a few questions that I have ask and wonder. The

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question about which schools are best for my child, I think have been answered by the parents who spoke so eloquently about preserving their right to chose what school is best for their child. So I will skip over that portion of my testimony where I highlighted the great work that our public charter schools are doing in our State and move to are our schools accountable to us in the community.

The Governor's Budget makes a proposed cut to the Commissioners Network of \$250,000 dollars. The Commissioners Network is the place where we support our lowest performing schools. Connecticut is chronically underperforming in our urban centers. Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford and Waterbury three in ten students are prepared for ninth grade or for the fourth grade. These numbers will tell us that these students are not ready to move on and be successful human beings in our society. So budgets are moral documents. So when we make these decisions and make these cuts we are not thinking about the long-term effects these cuts will have in the lives of our children. And I don't say that lightly because I live in Waterbury so it is our children.

As we think about what we are going to do to move forward we always talk about parental engagement, but once again the elimination of the Parent Trust Fund which is a \$267,000 reduction and the over \$500 dollar cut in afterschool programming which allowed many of our families to work so they can take care of their children. These cuts mean a lot to many families who don't have the resources of the ability to come here and talk to you about how this budget will have an impact on them and their community.

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School accountability is really important to us at ConnCAN. We care a lot about how our schools are performing and how our children are doing in those schools. So we really appreciate all the work that this Committee has done and that the Legislature has done to protect those students and to ensure that every single child, every single child, who is born in this State has the ability to live to their full potential and I am very nervous about what is happening as we continue to erode these services. We are continuing to say to many families and children in this State that you don't matter. We have a spot for you in a prison cell. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you, Subira. There is one other cut I want you to add to the list that is unacceptable and that is the \$500,000 dollars taken out of youth employment. We talk about the fact that we want our children to earn a living, they've got to learn how to earn a living and opportunities and that is also part of the [Sighs] what we need to do. Thank you for coming and thank you for your advocacy and staying towards the end of the day, so thank you. Thanks. Annette Armstrong and Eliza. Good evening. Is the microphone on? Is the red button up? Thank you.

ANNETTE ARMSTRONG: Good evening everyone, members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Annette Armstrong and I'm a proud grandmother of a 3rd-grade scholar at Achievement First Hartford Elementary School a lifelong Hartford resident and community activist. I have been before this Committee before and have been in the fight for fair funding for years because students like my precious

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granddaughter deserve it. I was heartbroken and quite frankly angry, to learn that the State is going to cut millions of much need dollars from our public charter schools. How can this be? These schools are already not receiving the right amount of funding to educate our kids even though they serve the children who need these amazing opportunities most. How can we talk about the children being our future, the urgent need to close the achievement and opportunity gap, the idea that black and brown children in this state, when given what they need, can exceed beyond our wildest dreams in school and beyond?

I love all of our Hartford babies, but this is personal for me. My granddaughter, Arianna, has been a high honors student since Kindergarten. She has already surpassed her end of year reading goals for third grade. I've even talked to her teachers about letting her sit in on 4th-grade math lessons because she is so bright and hungry for success. Some folks say "You make plans and God laughs" but my baby girl, she has mapped out what she wants in her life and it is awe-inspiring. Can someone help me explain to her why she and her classmates not only don't get the same amount of State funding and State dollars as their friends at other schools get but now even more money is being taken away? How now those after school programs she's been dreaming about, like the Drama Club, that won't happen? AF has been a blessing to her, but it sure feels like she and her classmates are being punished for the choice their families made in the best interest of their academic success and needs.

I know that the members of this committee are

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hardworking folks with families. I am too. And I want what you want, to make sure ALL of our kids have the tools and resources they need to meet their potential. I ask you keep my Ari in mind, a future doctor, astronaut, or master teacher, and all of her friends when making a decision as to whether or not you want to level the playing field with equal funding or continue to send a message that our charter school babies don't matter as much.

Please restore the dollars cut by the administration's budget and help us move toward a future where all kids receive the equitable funding they all deserve. Thank you for your time and God Bless each of you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you so much for staying. Thank you for coming in and advocating for the schools here in Hartford. She's in what grade, fourth grade?

ANNETTE ARMSTRONG: She's in third grade.

REP. WALKER (93RD): What school?

ANNETTE ARMSTRONG: Achievement First Hartford Elementary Academy.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, thank you. Thank you and thank you for advocating. Have a good evening. Eliza. Is there anybody here whose name I did not call that did not get to testify? Is there anybody whose name I did not call. Go right ahead.

ELIZA HALSEY: All right. Thank you all for sticking it out. I know it has been a long night

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for all of you. Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriations Committee my name is Eliza Halsey. I am the Executive Director of Elm City Montessori School in New Haven. I was also born and raised there. I have three children that attend New Haven Public Schools.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You daddy was on the Board of Ed too.

ELIZA HALSEY: Back in the '70s. That's a while back. He is a teacher now. So I am here to address the inadequate funding for New Haven Public Schools and for Elm City Montessori proposed in the Governor's FY 21 Budget. This year's increase of just 1.5 percent as Sarah was talking about to New Haven Public School doesn't keep up with inflation and leaves New Haven with a continued deficit and an inability to meet student's holistic needs.

In the funding proposed for Elm City Montessori doesn't account for our grade growths of our fifth graders transitioning to six grade. We are committed to ensuring that all New Haven children succeed and we urge you to ensure New Haven's Public Schools receive sufficient funding.

Seven years ago New Haven parents, educators and community leaders developed a vision for a high quality public Montessori School in our community, modeled after three successful public Montessori Schools in Hartford. And currently our approach is to focus on interactive hands-on and create thoughtfully prepared multi-aged classrooms that foster independence and creativity, and critical thinking and leadership. We want also then to have

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our New Haven students to have the well-rounded education that Montessori provides. In 2014 through a partnership with New Haven Public Schools and the State Department of Ed we launched Elm City Montessori School, New Haven's local Charter and first public Montessori School.

Today this is a strong and growing Pre-K/Five school filled with hope, passion and deep commitment to equity and social justice. Our programs develop mental approach to education integrates math, science, language, arts, music and the outdoors in a nurturing and academically rigorous environment that promotes lifelong learning and helps each child to reach his or her full potential. We are one of the most diverse schools in New Haven, 34 percent African American, 28 percent Latinx, 24 percent which and four percent multiracial. We've consistently had hundreds of families apply to our school each year. More that 600 applications for roughly 40 seats over the past five years and we have made critical investments in Early Childhood Education. You've heard about the cuts to School Readiness, that takes a hit, New Haven takes a hit when those funding cuts reach the Readiness or Early Childhood Programs.

Just a couple more minutes in closing, I am submitting written testimony but as a local charter school it is important that you know we receive \$3,000 dollars per pupil from the State Department of Ed and we currently enroll 229 students. We did not receive our full \$3,000 dollars per pupil. Next year we plan to enroll 266 students including 18 from outside New Haven through Open Choice. Based on these numbers we anticipated \$744,000 dollars but

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the Governor's Budget proposes only \$690,000 dollars and the impact of the cut on our small and growing school is substantial. It means we can't fund a teacher position. We urge you to fully fund these to ensure that grade growth for fifth graders going to sixth grade and then we also just are deeply invested in our partnership with NHPS and will continue to advocate on it's behalf so we urge you to maintain full funding for New Haven Public Schools as well.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Could you go back? You said that you are going to enroll?

ELIZA HALSEY: Two hundred sixty-six.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Two hundred and sixty-six and you said that you are not going to get \$3,000 dollars per student?

ELIZA HALSEY: Correct. At \$3,000 dollars per student we should be receiving \$744,000 dollars. We are slated for \$690,000 dollars in the Governor's Budget. It's a gap of \$54,000 dollars.

REP. WALKER (93RD): It's for the local charter's, right?

ELIZA HALSEY: Correct. We don't receive State funding for the Open Choice, the 18 Open Choice students. That's why the number is lower.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Oh, okay. I got it. So you have Choice Students and you don't get any funding for Choice Students?

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ELIZA HALSEY: We don't get State Funding for Choice Students, no.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Huh, we need to look at that. Okay, okay. No, I.

ELIZA HALSEY: New Haven receives funding for them I believe.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Oh, okay. Got it. Okay, thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for being here. You are the last one, eight o'clock and thank you for being totally committed to your program. It is a wonderful program. I've seen it, I've gone there and watched the kids and I've watched the parents. That is more of the thing I enjoyed most, so thank you and thank you for what you do.

ELIZA HALSEY: Thank you all for all of your hard work day-to-day.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I want to thank everybody for coming, I especially want to that Brian Corville for staying. I gave you that invitation and you stayed and I wanted to acknowledge that, so we know now you hear some of the testimonies so let's try and figure out how do we resolve this education problem in the State. Thank you very much. Thank you everybody. Drive safely and we will see you same time, next year, same time, same place. Thank you, bye-bye.