

CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Bob Duff
Representative Joseph Gresko

SENATORS: Formica, Hartley, Kelly,
Kushner, Looney, Moore, Somers

REPRESENTATIVES: Godfrey, D'Agostino, Kennedy,
Quinn, Vargas, Perillo,
Yaccarino

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, well, good morning everybody. I'll call the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee public hearing to order. We have four Members who -- four people who are gonna be testifying for -- to be Members of the State Board of Education. And, before we begin, I just want to see if there are any remarks from my Co-Chair? Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): No, sir. Good to go.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you. And again, good morning, everybody. Thank you all for being here today. First up will be Bonnie Burr of Brookfield to be Member of the State Board of Education.

Bonnie, I am finding you on my screen somewhere. There you are, top left for me, and good to see you. Would you please raise your right hand so we can see it? Thank you, and do you promise, swear, or affirm to tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

BONNIE BURR: I do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. It's customary that you can provide an introductory statement, and then we'll open it up for questions. The floor is yours, madam.

BONNIE BURR: Great. Thank you so much, Senator Duff, Representative Gresko and Members of the

Committee. My name is Bonnie Burr, and I'm from Brookfield, Connecticut, and I am indeed very honored to be nominated by Governor Lamont to fill the Agricultural Sciences position on a State Board of Education as set forth in state statutes.

Today, in light of that, I'm coming to you if you just click into my background from a very large greenhouse that has lettuce grown 365-days a year. And we can certainly get to some discussion on what that looks like with regards to education.

You have my testimony and my background with regards to my experience, so I'm not going to read from that, I will share that I anticipate bringing a very strong presence forward with regards to the importance of Agro-Science training, not only for the agricultural pieces that comes forward, but also for all of the technical work that goes into building these greenhouses and other forms of agriculture.

I certainly hope we can get to equity in how school choice programs are funded. These are something that is something that each one is a little bit different and certainly we could use to put everybody on an even playing field.

As I said, careers in agriculture are not just about growing food and plants, it's about all of the technical things that get into that. As we move into some of these 365-day greenhouses, we need welders, we need electricians, we need plumbers, we need HVAC, we need computer programmers that are gonna help us develop the systems that go into these kinds of year-round growing programs.

I will also be a strong advocate for making sure that our students have healthy school meals. Children cannot listen if they can't hear over the growling of their stomachs, and so we need to make sure that what we bring forward is a strong appreciation for the fact that we have to do school

breakfast school lunch, after school, suppers in the summer programs. Things like that are gonna be very, very important to our locally grown agricultural movement, as well as our farm to school processes that we have.

That's kind of the nutshell in terms of what I hope to bring to the State Board of Education, and I would open it up for any questions.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you very much. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the angle in which you provided your testimony and how it framed into Governor Lamont's nomination for you.

I would just say, for me, growing up in the city of Norwalk and being from Fairfield County, I remember when I was first working on a campaign back in 1994. I was a driver for a Senate President at the time. He was running for Governor, and remember driving over to Eastern Connecticut and thinking, oh my gosh, is this still Connecticut? Because it was so different than what I was used to in Southwestern Connecticut, which is more urban. And fact that we have to make sure that we are looking at our agricultural schools, our education and that agriculture is still such a big part of our local economy and learning more of that, obviously, as a legislator over the years.

So how do you think that, you know, we can improve on some of what you said? What are some tangible ways in which we can improve on having students have more options and Agro-cultural experience, and ensuring that we don't let this really important occupation go by the wayside?

BONNIE BURR: You know, Senator Duff, one of the really key things to all of this is the fact we have to get kids introduced to how food is produced at an early age. Some of the programs that we run -- I do work for UConn extension, we do 4-H programming. When we can put young people into a garden

experience, let them get their hands dirty, let them see how seeds grow when they're five, six years old, that just starts to really engage them at a younger age. And when we can get them engaged when they're in elementary school when they get to high school, you know, they're starting to look at what can Agriculture be, what does that mean with regards to potential careers. And so it's a process that starts early in life, and that's really where we have to really focus and go for.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate that. And one last thing, as far as like healthy meals for kids, and you spoke about that for a second too. Even at -- I remember Jefferson elementary school, we had a partnership with UConn and others on healthy meals and trying to -- whether it's gardens by the schools or trying to teach them -- the kids about how that benefits them personally or get them. That's again -- I mean, my grandparents got me interested in gardening at a very early age because that's what they did. They were members of the Connecticut State Grange as a matter of fact and --

BONNIE BURR: Wow.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): So am I, still to this day. But you know, we always went to up to the Agro-cultural fairs. So for me, it was very, you know, part of growing up to a certain extent, but, you know, how do we get kids who are in a more urban area, and interested, involved in gardening and eating healthy and, you know, based on hands on, you know, and kind of something tangible for them?

BONNIE BURR: Sure, so one of the programs I'll highlight, and just because I, you know, I see that we have Senator Moore and Representative Gresko on, is a program that we do in Bridgeport around mentoring. And that requires us going into some of -- we identify some of the schools that are very keen to work in this area and we go in and we help

develop school gardens. And one of the things that they do, a lot of this is as after school as well, is getting them outside. And when you just kind of slip some of the stem programming in, some of the cool things you can do after school, you know, that's, again, where it starts to develop into something more.

Most kids when they're looking at, you know, what we're doing with growing vegetables and gardens, they don't understand the science and the technology and the engineering and the math. All of those stem components, you know, that come into play.

So again, it's making sure that we continue to get into to students that normally don't see access, you know, to school gardens, to urban farming as something that's fully open and fully available to them. So it does take that extra effort to really dig in, and pun intended, and figure out a way to get people understanding how delicious this can be, how fun it can be, yet, it can also lead to some really cool careers.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, thank you very much. I appreciate that. Representative Gresko, do you have any questions?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Just one dovetailing off of your line of questioning. We were lucky enough in Bridgeport last week to get a \$50,000 dollar grant from the Department of Agriculture for a parcel that will have three containers on it that will function as a hydroponic facility for microgreens. And I was hoping that you can bring your expertise to the State Board of Education and have a better contact with Department of Agriculture because, you know, as you know, it's one thing to engage in and present the options available to a student, especially in an urban area, but what -- when you have that as a market as well, and I can foresee this hydroponics because they are, you know, 365 being funneled into the school system there. So you're getting --

you're eating what you're growing, and you have your own built-in market. So I'm hoping that's something that you're interested in.

BONNIE BURR: Yeah. Very much so. I think for those that aren't familiar with your Sound school, your Agro-Science program that you do it in Bridgeport. Bridgeport has one of only three systems that allows young people to get in and learn how to pilot boats, and one of the really cool things that happens in the Agro-Science or aqua science programs that you've got there, certainly, is teaching people, teaching students the value, not only of what we can do on land, but also what we can do in Long Island Sound. And I think that the fact that some of these young people are exposed to such amazing technology, I think the Coast Guard has one of these systems and probably the Sound school over in Groton has one. But again, it's giving access and giving more access.

You know, when they're growing their fishing, and that they've gotten the tanks there and then selling it. You know, I said to -- being in Brookfield it's, you know, it's a fairly quick ride down to Bridgeport, and it's like, "How often can I come down here and buy fish from you?" And they're like, "Wednesday afternoons", and I'm like okay.

You know, so there's just -- the students are not only learning how to pilot a boat, they're learning about the fish, they're learning about sales, they're learning about marketing, they're learning about cooking. And again, that all ties into the whole value of having a technical program as a high school.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Well, thank you for the answer. I'm glad to hear that you're interested in it like we all are. My niece graduated from the aquaculture school in Bridgeport and she's now the curator of a museum in Key West. So, you know,

there you go. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you very much. Any questions from other Members of the Committee? Make sure I can see your hand there. Representative Kennedy, do you have any questions at all?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Okay, all right now, just a brief comment. I want to thank -- she keeps moving on my screen. I don't know where she just went. I want to thank you for being here this morning and the enthusiasm that you bring to this appointment, I think it'll be a wonderful for all of our students in the State of Connecticut.

Just really quick, you had mentioned equity in school choice, could you just touch on that just a little bit more, please?

BONNIE BURR: Sure. Sure, absolutely. When you take a look at how school choice is funded, charter schools are funded one way, magnet schools are funded another, Agro-Science are funded yet another way and the technical schools have their own, you know, system in terms of how they are administered. So I think that having a conversation around making sure that there's equitable funding going into all three of those is gonna be important.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Great. Thank you very much, and I love your background, as you say. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Again, just make sure I can see your hands. Representative Gresko, and then Representative Quinn.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Yeah, I was gonna say the hands are raised, so Representative Quinn has his hand raised.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Thank you, Chairman Duff. And Ms. Burr, thank you very much for your willingness to step forward and serve in this role. I'm a graduate of the Lyman Hall Vo-Ag program in Wallingford. And while I'm not doing anything in my life remotely related to agriculture at this point, I would go back and do that program again in a second, and I'm a firm believer in the Vo-Ag programs and the technical school programs.

What can be done at the state to expand opportunities for other students? Vo-Ag is very competitive to get into, and each year a lot of students who want to don't get into the programs. Lyman Hall is substantially larger than when I was there 35 years ago, but there still is a waiting list and number of applications still exceed the number of spots. What can be done to change that?

BONNIE BURR: Sure, Representative Quinn, that was a great question. I think one of the things that we need to look at, and as you identified, so many of these Agro-Science programs are having far too many applicants for the positions that can be seated. I was on the Consultant Committee years ago over at Nonnewaug, so again, it's really difficult when you hear that you've got hundreds of young people that want to get in but a very limited number that actually make the opportunity to become students in the towns where these are housed.

I think one of the things that we need to address is that agriculture and food production, food insecurity, food justice, these are all things that can be woven into some of the regular social science programs that we're teaching in schools. And that's certainly something that we can get to.

The other area that we can again continue to look at is how we're going forward with regards to doing

after-school programs. There's a number of grants that are available through USDA that do again engage in and empower programs to really get to how young people learn how to grow food and where their food comes from.

This also ties to the health. One of the projects that we work on is called Children Youth and Families at Risk, and it really gets to a lot of the food insecurity that families encounter. So these are some of the programs that we really need to ramp up with regards to how we're doing after-school programs as well, but again, weaving a lot of these pieces into some of their regular curriculum is one way to get to that.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Okay. Thank you, and again, thank you for your willingness, and congratulations on your nomination.

BONNIE BURR: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Thank you very much, and is there anybody else? I am -- and I want to apologize in advance. I am having a hard time seeing if anybody is raising their hand. So if I'm not seeing it, I apologize.

Let's see. I'm trying to get on the right view here. Is there anybody else who has a question for Ms. Burr? Anybody else? Okay. Anybody else? Seeing none.

Okay, we ask one last question. Again, we just want to congratulate you on your appointment to the Board of Education, State Board of Education. We just -- one last question we ask everybody who comes through our Committee. Is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor, or the State of Connecticut?

BONNIE BURR: Absolutely nothing.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you so much, and we appreciate your time today.

BONNIE BURR: Thank you very much.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. All right, next is resolution confirming Eric Clemons of New Haven to be a Member of the State Board of Education. Welcome, Mr. Clemons.

ERIK CLEMONS: Good morning.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): How are you? If you wouldn't mind just raise your right hand, please. Do you promise, swear, or affirm to tell us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

ERIK CLEMONS: I do.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, sir. You may start with an opening statement. The floor is yours.

ERIK CLEMONS: Good morning. Thank you. Hello, Senator Duff, Representative Gresko, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy and Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Eric Clemons. I'm honored to be nominated by governor Lamont to be a member of the Connecticut State Board of Education. Also, my sincere thanks to this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you to speak to my desire to continuing serving on the Connecticut State Board of Education, thus, this is a reappointment for me.

When receiving the news about my reappointment or my recommendation for reappointment to the State Board of Education, I was immediately excited. My excitement rest in the fact that Connecticut State Board of Education, along with the Connecticut State Department of Education has come to represent, in my opinion, this country's most innovative and

courageous leadership in the sphere of public education. Enlightened by the responses to the COVID pandemic, procuring of technology devices to address student digital divide, demonstration of diversity and equity of SDE staff and SBE members giving evidence to my claim.

To know that I have an opportunity to remain a part of such pioneering work again is really, really exciting for me. Moreover, I had the great privilege of being in the presence of and learning from a collection of very impressive and committed SBE Members who have been powerful, passionate about education and committed to children. Their membership and collegiality has allowed me to better understand the travails, complexities and rewards of guiding an educational institution such as SDE, local boards of education and local school boards and local schools at that.

You have before you, my testimony. I won't go into the long journey that it took for me to get here and my passion around education. But I will say that looking at this state, especially, and how it is courageously addressing the issue of race, of inequity and poverty really inspires me to continue on. So I'll remain there you have -- again you have my testimony and I will take any questions you have.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you very much, and so, sir, this is -- I just wanted to say, reappointment for you?

ERIK CLEMONS: Mm-hmm. It is.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): And what has been so far, I guess, on your first tour of duty on the State board of Education [laughter] what has been some of the kind of things that you're most proud of that has taken -- that's happened under your past.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yes, great question, Senator Duff.

Well, I will add, I will say that this is a lot of work, more work than I thought it would be. It is at a pace that is like no other. I again, as I mentioned the collegiality, and the really the impressive group of people that I've been able to serve with has really inspired me and given me a better understanding of how to run a big ship, as it relates to SDE.

One thing I'm really, really proud of is our execution of the five-year strategic plan. I'm also proud of being a member who hired Dr. Miguel Cardona although he has left us very quickly. And I'm really proud of the work that we continue to do in communities, right. Really courageously looking at poverty and how it impacts children and continues to marginalize families, and connecting that to the educational sphere is really something I'm very proud of. And really quite frankly, is dear to my heart.

If you look in, and you mentioned you're from Norwalk, I heard a lot about you. I grew up -- born and raised in all Connecticut and grew up very, very poor living in the Carver apartments, was raised by a community center, the Carver Community Center which I'm sure you're familiar with.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): I am.

ERIK CLEMONS: [laughs] And, you know, went on to do really great things but it is really that community and that nest of people who really impressed me upon education, always being educated, always coming back to the community and helping others. That is really what I think the State Board of Ed is talking about now and trying to do, right. Really getting traction and community, not just schools. That to me is really, really important. So I'm very proud of that because it is really my sweet spot, to be honest with you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah, and I think that's really very, very important obviously. And I like the fact that you've, you know, you're President, founding CEO and President of Center for Arts and Technology. The arts offer higher order thinking, and as a person who was involved in the music program from third grade through high school, you know, having that and having that ability to match that with the rest of your educational experience, I think makes -- provides opportunities for some -- a lot of kids who may not have had that opportunity. And it -- I know a lot of kids who were kind of at the fork in the road, they could have gone either way, and having that strong arts program was one that put them on their track for success rather than someplace else.

ERIK CLEMONS: Absolutely, absolutely.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right, you know, I appreciate all the work you've done and will continue to do. So thank you, sir. Representative Gresko, any questions?

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair, just one. Mr. Clemons, you -- in your first tour of duty, as it was put, were visionary enough to choose Dr. Cardona to be our Education Commissioner, now Secretary Cardona. So knowing that you know what you're doing, how would you look at the situation now, and recommend to the Governor our next education Commissioner?

ERIK CLEMONS: Oh man, that's a great question, great question. You know, I wasn't alone in choosing him, but he was number one on my list. Looking at the attributes of all candidates, right. Are they humble, are they empathetic? Do they really understand the rigor of running an organization so large and so important? Do they really care about

kids? Especially the marginalized kids,
Representative Gresko. That's really important.

It's easy to deal with the kids who are going to do well because they will always do well, and they will make you look good but our -- do you really have a heart for those, the critical mass of kids who are struggling and continue to struggle? And how do you create a strategic plan around helping those young people while continuing to move the ship? So those are some of the things that I look for in a leader, especially educational leader. And Dr. Cardona did that, so he is the kind of primal analog to me of picking a new another candidate just given where this state is headed around public education.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, and well, we're going to revisit your nomination in the very near future. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you very much. Senator Looney. Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Clemons.

ERIK CLEMONS: Hello, Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Congratulations again, on your renomination. Congratulations on your renomination.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): I think [inaudible] involvement in education at this time is one of the critical missions in our state, and I think the board has been doing a fine job. Again, the selection of former Commissioner Cardona has now become our National Education Secretary is a sign of the quality that the State Board of Education is

able to identify and seek out and find for that critical position.

So I also want to commend you on your service over the years with the Center for Arts and Technology and the -- your interest, not only in education, but also in the practical preparation of people for the workforce. There are many people working now as cooks and chefs and phlebotomist in greater New Haven, who have gone through your program and are now [inaudible].

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you. Thank you so much.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): -- fully employed and good - - buying homes, paying mortgages, raising families due to the job training that they got through your program. So it's for you, it's not just theory but also practice, and successful practice.

One of the things I wanted to ask you about is the issue of state bond funds for school construction. As you know, many cities, New Haven in particular received a very significant commitment from the state over the 15-year period when New Haven's entire physical plant for its school system was basically rebuilt with many new schools being constructed, many older schools being renovated. It was about a \$1.6 billion dollar program, of which the state paid over 80% over 1.3 billion.

Just like to have your -- what we're hearing reports now for New Haven that some of the buildings, even some of the relatively new ones, one of them may need to be closed because of inadequate HVAC system or inadequate maintenance of that. Should we be doing more to make the local boards of ED and local school systems accountable to the state and to the State Board of Education for upkeep and maintenance of the facilities that have been paid for largely with state dollars? Should we have a mandatory audit requirement that they submit documentation about

their compliance on an annual basis with what they're doing to make sure the state's investment is maintained? Just do your thoughts on that.

ERIK CLEMONS: So thank you for the question. I quite frankly I don't know a lot about state bond funding as it relates to building schools. I do recall the proliferation of construction for the schools in New Haven. And I think it gave Hew Haven a real jolt in the arm in terms of its economic infrastructure and setting up capital formation in New Haven.

I do believe in compliance. I do believe that there should be accountability and maintenance scalability for those schools that have been built. And if they are in disrepair and decline, then, you know, I think the local boards should be held accountable for that. I think that's a logical answer. Absolutely.

You know, as you know, Senator Looney, we are endeavoring and building a \$200 million dollar project on Dixwell avenue, and there's a lot of compliance around that. There's a lot of accountability when you are given or provided dollars to do construction and to erect buildings. There are certain things that have to be complied with ongoing. And so, for me, that's very logical, yeah. Like those who are in charge should be held accountable for that, absolutely.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thanks. Good. Well, thank you and I'm so pleased that you're willing to continue this form of public service in addition to the busy life that you lead and the important work that you're involved in. So I'm so pleased you're willing to continue, and thank you very much.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you, sir, it's good to see you.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. Thank you, Senator Looney. Senator Looney, did it right. If everybody can -- if you want to have a question just do this 'cause that's how I can see you. So that's the best way to be able to make sure you get my attention. Representative -- I don't see anybody else right now except for Rep. Edwin Vargas who has a question. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Hey, Mr. Chairman. Whenever I have an opportunity to speak to a person being either appointed or reappointed to the State Board of Education, I make it a point to speak a little bit about the proliferation of charter schools.

Originally, I was a supporter of the charter school movement because I believed that we could create urban models that could help our public schools. But after a while they started creating a completely separate system and draining resources from the public schools, so I've doubled down on the fact that we need to improve our public schools and start to move away from these models that organized around a certain group of kids, especially in light of what happen January six in Washington DC.

We need public schools more than ever where kids from all walks of life have a chance to interact. And unfortunately, when we organize kids around either an ethnic theme or a political theme, all we do is create more walls and divisions. And as you mentioned earlier, you said that, you know, the kids that are gonna succeed, are gonna succeed. Unfortunately, many times, these charter schools are organized around the kids that are gonna succeed anyway. And many of the kids that have learning disabilities or have problems with English language are the ones that get left behind.

Although they say it's a blind lottery, frankly, when a kid does get into those schools, you probably read in the newspapers how they get suspended and expelled. Ultimately, the parents give up and

return to their neighborhoods, public schools
anyway.

So I know we have a moratorium on the construction
of new charter schools. So there hasn't been anyone
that has been opened up recently, and I'd like to
keep it that way. Anyway, what are your thoughts on
that?

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you, Representative Vargas.
That's a really great question and a tough
question. I am not against charter schools. What I
am against, I am against cramming, right. I am
against taking from the top and only inserting those
kids in your school -- in particular schools.

What I said earlier in my opening statement was what
I'm inspired about is the address to poverty. And I
think when we really look at poverty and how that
shakes out and how it really, it's -- I'm talking
about generational poverty. There is a -- there
seems to be a need for a different type of school
because the other schools, for whatever reason, were
not working. I think we're addressing that issue
now. I don't believe all charter schools are the
same. I think some behaved very badly, as do some
public, traditional public schools behave very,
very badly.

I am glad there is a moratorium on the building of
new charter schools to really investigate what this
is all about, but I'm not against charter schools.
I think if there are schools that help black and
brown kids especially that -- and it is helping them
along and thereby helping their families, then I am
all for it. Again, there are some schools that
suspend -- some charter schools that suspend and
they cram and just really bad examples, just really
bad apples in the sphere of charter. But if, in
fact, there are kids who are being educated, who
were not being educated before, then I'm all for
that whether they be charter or from formerly or
traditionally public.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): One of the problems is the infusion of private dollars into this whole charter school issue. There's a group in Danbury of Latino activists that have been trying to pressure me into supporting a charter for them, and frankly, I've been telling them no. And, you know, they seem to have made some inroads with some of my colleagues. However, recently, they wanted us to sign a letter in support of their charter school and I said I would decline signing a letter. They claim they had their license prior to the moratorium and therefore should be exempted from the moratorium, grandfathered in.

I look at it this way when we asked them, and I think it was the Chair of our -- the House Chair of our Appropriations Committee, Representative Toni Walker, who said, "Well, you're talking about something that cost \$20 million dollars to build," the proponent said, "No, problem we already received \$25 million dollars from a Manhattan organization. " You know as well as I do the \$25 million dollars would go a long way in improving any public school.

So when we're looking at these schools that become the sexy new model with the infusion of private dollars, it's really not a level playing field that we're talking about.

But, you know, I think about this because, you know, we had the whole issue years ago under the Reagan administration of whether we should give vouchers to parents so that they could pick the schools of their choice. And that was a long-drawn-out battle. It hasn't gone away 100%, but I think most people realize, wait a second, we do have public schools. I would like to see that group in Danbury organized about -- around improving the public schools in Danbury. I would like to see parents involved at the same level, but unfortunately, you know, when there's infusions of outside dollars like this, like I said earlier, it's not a level playing field

because nobody's gonna pay you to organize around improving your local public school, as they do with these charter schools.

And this infusion of private dollars, which, you know, is really a switch and bait because the money is there at the beginning, but once the schools open, they're back on the taxpayer. They become a burden on the taxpayer and they start demanding more grades, you know, this -- if they only went from pre-K through three, then they want the fourth grade and they want the fifth grade, the sixth grade and it becomes a dynamo that keeps on drawing on resources that we need sorely to improve our public schools.

And when you think about it, you say well, you know, you got a group of Latino kids in Danbury that could benefit perhaps from having a Latino themed charter school with all this infusion of money coming from Manhattan would be a wonderful thing for those kids. But think about it when it's a group organizing around white supremacists malicious or some other group, would we be equally enthusiastic about that and is that gonna help heal the wounds that we face as a society?

The public schools are the only institution in the United States that has kept our democracy strong, and as we walk away from our commitment to public schools, I think we're facing a danger. And if we compartmentalize ourselves in themes schools, we're doing, I believe, we're doing a disservice to future generations. That's just food for thought.

ERIK CLEMONS: I appreciate that, and you are definitely more well versed than I am, and I appreciate your passion around that issue. I don't know if you're asking -- I have a question for you because I want to be clear about what you're saying. Are you saying that \$25 million dollars to a private organization to set up a private or a charter school

is wrong or you're against that but you're for private money for enhancing public school education?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): That's absolutely right because --

ERIK CLEMONS: Got it

REP. VARGAS (6TH): -- because what happens is it becomes a way for private dollars to influence public policy.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): We're held over a barrel, the only way you're going to get these resources is if you support the charter school movement, otherwise the resources are not gonna --

ERIK CLEMONS: Okay. I totally understand. All right, I got that. And I also you raised a point, which is really interesting to me that \$25 million dollar infusion to white supremacists, right, is -- would be wrong as well, right. But I would submit that there has been private money given for white supremacy for centuries, right. And so you can use the capital as an example of the fervor of that, right, of extremism of that, but if you look theoretically, right, white supremacy has lived for centuries and has been well capitalized for centuries. So I, you know, I do agree with you and there's a larger issue there that we need to discuss and dig into. But thank you for -- those are really provocative questions, very thoughtful.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. Are you all set, Representative Vargas?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I -- yes. All -- but, you know, I just want to reiterate, all the more reason we should double down on improving our public schools.

ERIK CLEMONS: Gotcha. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): And good news is our Clerk Wendy Fritz has made me a Co-host to the meeting so now I can see if somebody raises their hand on the little box on the top left [laughter]. Now I know it's not me. Why I couldn't see it, I was getting very nervous for a while.

So the hand I see next is Representative Godfrey who had -- and Representative Kennedy, do you have a question too? And we'll go to Representative Godfrey. I saw his hand. If Representative Kennedy if you have one too. And if you -- I think if you raise your hands, a little hand goes up on the left, I can see that. Thank you.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Bob Godfrey. I'm from Danbury and I'm here almost dancing at my good friend Ed Vargas questions and the responses. I oppose taking taxpayer dollars, Connecticut taxpayer dollars, Danbury taxpayer dollars and giving it to a big business in New York City. Who quite frankly, in my opinion, are in town because it's about the money and it's not about education.

When they first came into town, they targeted the richest neighborhoods in Danbury saying, "Oh, you know, we'll have a school for your kids. " And I read, you know -- I understand code, I've heard it for over 70 years. That really bothered me, it didn't work.

So then they targeted the Hispanic Community suggesting we can start segregating schools by race and national origin. Now, you know, I'm 72 and I remember and participated in small ways in the move in the 60s and before to integrate schools, and now I see groups out here saying, "Well, we should really do segregating schools again. " In every fiber of my being I oppose the very idea of it. And those who somehow say, "Oh, we'll get better

schools, if we segregate. " I just completely oppose that idea, it's just un-American.

And then along comes this \$25 million dollar quote, donation, unquote, anonymous. Why is the donor hiding? What does he or she, are they actually up to? If this is such a good thing, why aren't they out there in public? And again, this builds up my impression 'cause it's all about getting taxpayer dollars funneled into a big business in New York City.

So the entire Danbury Delegation opposes this particular idea, and instead we're quite aware, certainly, that Danbury schools are extremely overcrowded. Commissioner Cardona in one of his first acts came down visit it, saw it all, and we worked collaboratively with him in dealing with the issues. And I want to thank my colleagues for voting to provide for an 80% state bonding for the Danbury Academy, which is a -- is a kind of a magnet school with very specialized curricula for high school, and I'm hoping middle school students.

And it's unique in that it's the first time Connecticut has actually moved to create a school under a condo ownership as opposed to a standalone building. It's the old summit, the old Union Carbide property in Danbury. We're taking an entire wing to turn into a school. The referendum in Danbury for the 20% local match will happen later this year, probably in June or so. And I'm going to be a big proponent for that.

I would rather see that we work with the local Board of Education to prompt -- I think we need -- I think, in my opinion, we need more -- some more new schools here in Danbury to relieve the overcrowding, but I'm hoping and I've been working for over three years now with Toni Walker, who's the Chair of our Appropriations Committee, on getting Danbury into the open choice program.

Here I am sitting in a town with overcrowded schools. Frankly, Bethel, our next-door neighbor has the same kind of overcrowding issues. They've only gotten bigger since the COVID-19 because we're seeing a huge influx of people, especially from Westchester County in New York, but other places in New York moving into Connecticut. And they're coming to Danbury because Danbury has a really excellent ELL program in our school system and that's what people want. And I think that's the kind of thing that needs funding from both the municipalities, from the school district and from the state.

So we're seeing this going on, meanwhile we've got suburban towns who have a lot of empty desks. Both Ridgefield and New Fairfield have that issue, and both have also expressed interest in the open choice program. So I'm waiting to see in the next day or so what the Governor's budget will do with the whole school funding issue. But it seems to me, that rather than send taxpayer dollars to a big business in New York City, we should be enhancing our own state investment in public education. And that is certainly the traditional public schools and, in my opinion, I know this is outside of the Board of Ed's purview. But we've got a look at the same thing for both our community colleges and I have a Naugatuck Valley satellite here in Danbury and our state universities, and of course, I have Western Connecticut State University based right here in Danbury. It provides a great opportunity across the board, you actually don't have to leave home in Danbury to get a Master's degree in -- with, you know, without leaving home.

So I get concerned and share Representative Vargas's beliefs and hopes that the State Board of Education concentrate on building up public schools, building up the investment in public schools and just stopping this now discredited move that was -- you know, Betsy DeVos and Donald Trumps' were the champions that was meant to destroy the public

school system and turn education into a commodity. That really sticks in my craw, the whole idea that this is like, you know, corn futures.

It's just, just wrong. So I'm hoping that you share the -- my obviously passion for investing more and more and more in our public school system from preschool to university, certainly, but in your particular case because of your sterling work on the Board of Education, which I do hope will continue, that the commitment to public education is not just continued but enhanced and strengthened. So I'd appreciate your comments.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah, Representative Godfrey. One, you are very passionate. I appreciate that. One thing I really, really appreciate about this conversation with you and Representative Vargas is that we can have an open and honest discussion as it relates to race and education, right, which is -- you don't usually have. And so I appreciate your comment.

My comments to you would be this. I do -- I would imagine that the folks who were inspired to receive this \$25 million dollars from a private investment and set up a Latino, Latina school, I would imagine they were inspired by the fact that maybe these kids were not learning in their traditional schools the way they wanted them to.

Now, what I like -- again, I go back to my original testimony, what I love about the work that the board has been doing since I've been on the board, and a lot of my colleagues, whether in the board or in community is this idea of really understanding cultural competence, right, and racial bias in schools. Right, the understanding of black and brown children if you are a white teacher or a non-black and brown teacher, right. That to me is really where the rubber meets the road. And really, we can enhance our schools and enhance the learning of our children, and not just our children, but the

teachers because they are now understanding their own biases. They are understanding what these children are dealing with, what these families are dealing with, and sometimes what they are suffering from that is not allowing them to learn in school.

And so to the extent that we can continue to enhance that, as Rep. Vargas and you Rep. Godfrey have really advocated for, I am all for that. That is why this board and this SDE really, really inspired me because, again, they are tackling the issue of poverty as it connects to school and how poverty has impact. And that's not allowed for generations of people to learn and live up to their potential. So I am all with you on that, absolutely.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): I totally applaud and endorse that approach; it gives me a very high comfort level.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yes.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): It's, you know, there are three Members of the House that actually live in Danbury, although there's three more whose district includes pieces of Danbury even though they live in a suburban town. And we've been working on this issue, but my district is the urban district, it's the downtown issue. It's the downtown district, it's the neighborhoods where there are mostly rentals, where there's single parent families, where there's a huge number of recent immigrants.

And, as you know, and as the grandson of immigrants, I both appreciate and understand that. And I have long been a supporter and I'm happy to see the Board of Ed, State Board of Ed is also in creating more opportunities for non-English language speaking students, for people of color.

It's -- we've got a long way with -- you know, I've been fighting all my life on these issues, we've got a long way to go before we reach the wonderful day

when we judge people on the strength of their character and not on the color of their skin. That still is the mantra to me from Martin Luther King way back way back in the 1960s.

So if -- I'm a strong supporter and endorse the idea of more people of color becoming teachers, we need to do more minority recruitment in this state. The Legislature has been very, very supportive of that idea and that needs to be continued and further enhanced. We need to make faculty look like the student body, and understand in Danbury it's not just Spanish speaking. I have a large Portuguese speaking. I live right in that main neighborhood.

When we talk about providing government information in more than one language, in Danbury we need -- we're talking about Spanish and Portuguese, so we got to -- And in my school system, there are over 60 languages that are spoken at home of by our students, and that is -- big Southeast Asian population, Portuguese both continental and Brazilian.

It's quite a challenge. And to have the support of people like yourself, sir, who are on the State Board of Education for both understand that and will work very hard to make sure that our school systems, our public-school systems are up to this huge challenge. So thank you for your very helpful attitude and kind words on this, and you certainly have my support. Let's continue working on this together.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Thank you very much.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you, Mr. Godfrey, I appreciate it, thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. I see two hands up, yay. [laughter] Representative Kennedy followed by Representative Yaccarino.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I promise to be quick. Thank you, Mr. Clemons, for being here and thank you for continuing your services, very appreciative. As someone who at a very young age went through the New Haven public schools, I certainly realize the importance of public schools. And you hit on a couple of words that really resonated with me; race, inequity and poverty. And also, those struggling children and making sure that we reach them. And during this COVID times, as you well know, as we all been -- very difficult to keep those students engaged, and so it's all more important than now.

So I'm sure you've probably heard my question is Hartford public schools have talked about the idea of extending the school year. [clears throat] Excuse me, and I was wondering if you could give me your thoughts on that, and how can we -- how can the State Department of Education show support and helping those children?

ERIK CLEMONS: Wow, that's a big question, Representative Kennedy, but thank you. Extending the school year, you know, I would actually be in favor of that, given what the pandemic has done. I don't know if you know, but we opened up a learning hub at the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology that Senator Lonney knows well about. And we are bringing kids in who don't have supervision at home, who don't have lunch at home or breakfast at home.

And so we're bringing -- we have room for 50 kids that we brought it and they come daily to ConnCAT to -- and go over their lessons and we hire tutors and mentors and -- as they're online, but there's a lot of learning loss. And if in fact, as Representative Godfrey had mentioned, the long way to go that we

have, if in fact we are to get there, then we will not get there with kids losing learning.

And it's actually -- I'm on a Committee of Academic Standards and Assessments where we talk openly about the learning loss during two months of the summer. So imagine what has happened during this full school year. And so I would be -- I'll probably get a slap on the hand for this by a lot of folks who are in New Haven, but I would be definitely for extending the school year because not only does it allow for the learning not to be lost but even acquired, but it also allows for a level of safety for these kids that I know of that during the summer may not have anywhere to go or anything to do. And so I'm always in favor of any kind of programmatic facilitation to allow the kids to continue to learn and to be safe, so I would be all for that.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Clemons. And I do appreciate those words. I can remember my early days, spent a lot of time in school in New Haven. And you're right, it's a safe place for our students and so very important, so thank you very much and --

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): -- also want to thank you for continuing to serve. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ERIK CLEMONS: I appreciate it.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Clemons, for stepping up and it sounds like you do an amazing job.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): So I read a lot of history and things we're speaking of today have been going on -- they're continuous. It's perpetual. It's either inner city or poor black brown or white kids are not getting a full education. This -- Unfortunately, it's been happening for many, many years in our country. But more so now in the inner cities and the poor areas.

I love the idea with the arts and culture what you're doing but for me, it's having that child or the young teenager to believe in themselves but also believe they have an opportunity. And it sounds like you're doing a great job, but whatever form of education that child or anybody could get is something that's great that will last with them forever. So with you and your New Haven.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yes.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): I live in North Haven. My grandmother used to live Edgewood Avenue and that's what I haven't you --

ERIK CLEMONS: Oh wow.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah.

ERIK CLEMONS: I live over there too.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah, so anyway, but what do -- you do anything for recruitment for students or for like mentoring because if you have no hope, it's just -- it's perpetual and it's sad.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): It's just -- it's so sad.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah. Yeah, no, that's a great question. So what we do is we have adult education, right, and we have three workforce development programs; culinary, medical billing and coding, and

phlebotomy, as Senator Lonney alluded to. But we also have an arts after-school and summer program, and we have an entrepreneurship academy for high school students.

Originally, Representative Yaccarino, it was for New Haven high school students, but there was such a need for kids to learn entrepreneurship and those skills, that we opened it statewide. And it's now an 80-student summer program where these kids learn entrepreneurship because, as you know, a lot of kids, and we need to address this too, may not want to go to college. They may not have the wherewithal; they don't have the -- but they may be entrepreneurial in their thinking and in their spirit. And so we open it up statewide for that, and so we do a lot of mentoring, a lot of teaching.

And I will say for me. I'll use myself, hopefully, as a salient example, you know. I had -- you know, I was raised by a Community Center called the Carver Community Center and that the head of that community center was a man named Mr. Richard Fuller. And Mr. Fuller for me, as I was a young kid even into adulthood, was that shining example. He was that north star for me who modeled the love of community, the love of educational rigor and the love of humanity. And so I had a model to look at and say, "Okay, that is what I want to be, and that is what I want to look like.

I think that is the greatest teacher, in my opinion, right. That shining example of folks who may be every day get up and go to work.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right.

ERIK CLEMONS: And so that's what we have to get down to, that's how we can turn this thing around. It is not just real technical education or just academic education, it is real life experience and people sharing their story, as Mr. Godfrey so eloquently shared his passionately and Mr. Vargas

sharing their story, the good bad and ugly such to teach the generations behind us until -- that to me that's the best teacher.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): I agree. I visited with Senator Looney and I -- former speaker Aresimowicz and Toni -- Representative Walker, I believe it's Eli Whitney after-school program for not just New Haven kids, anybody that could qualify or wants to go there. I'm sure you're familiar with that.

ERIK CLEMONS: I am. I am.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And I think -- I actually think we need more of that, you know, longer -- many times Vo-Ag or Vo-tech, but something again, it's just having -- you need hope.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And I was one of those teenagers that I was probably -- I had great parents, great teachers, what got me through was the reading skills that I developed when I was little but it's having that ray of hope that you have to believe in yourself. And we could talk about politics all day who -- charter schools, private schools, at the end of the day, its kids getting an education, kids getting -- having hope.

With now with the pandemic many kids are not going to school and that's just -- and that's so detrimental to them. And I would hope they could go back to the classroom safely because they'll never get that back. And you go on the wrong side if you could make a quick buck somewhere else, you're gonna say, "You know what, forgot school I'm gonna do something else. "

ERIK CLEMONS: Yeah.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And I think that we -- we're fortunate to have somebody like you and we need more

people like you, I think. But at the end of the day, it's common sense and programs that are practical, not some rocket science, obviously, you want that but that's practical where you could get it -- self-esteem, get a job, raise a family, hopefully, God willing, and make a better life for yourself.

ERIK CLEMONS: That is so true.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): It's all about education

ERIK CLEMONS: No, you're right. And some -- a word I didn't use, what I always used, to your credit you used it, hope.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah, hope.

ERIK CLEMONS: We have nothing if we have no -- if you have hope, right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): I just -- I read a lot of -- everything, but right now I'm reading a book about the 50s and 60s and there is -- it's talking about segregation. There's still -- you don't want segregation, we don't -- that's -- you need people to interact with one another.

ERIK CLEMONS: Right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): You need people to learn from one another. If you don't know somebody of color or somebody from color know somebody that's white, you just gonna have a prejudgment unfortunately, you have to know somebody. And instantly many cases like, you know, their families, go to dinner, go to your house and dinner whatever. And it -- so we have -- it's all too long, it's been forever.

ERIK CLEMONS: Right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): We're gonna come a long way, but not far enough.

ERIK CLEMONS: That's right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And, you know, if somebody wants to have a -- I'm not a big believer of charter schools but if they work and they're not using many tax dollars and kids are getting education, that's what it's all about.

ERIK CLEMONS: That's right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Children getting education. That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chair, both Chairs and I'd love to meet you some time. I live right in North Haven.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yes. I'm right of Westville.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah. Thank you, and God bless you. Keep up the good work.

ERIK CLEMONS: You too. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative Yaccarino.

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Any other -- I don't see any other hands up virtually or in person. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? Any other questions from Members of the Committee?

Okay, Mr. Clemons, before I finish with our closing statement, I'll just say that, in front of the road academy street where Carver Center is his name for, Mr. Fuller now, and Mrs. Fuller Carolyn is still in the school system, doing her thing. So she's still as enthusiastic as ever. So education, you know, runs in that family.

ERIK CLEMONS: That's right, that's right. And their son is teaching, correct?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yep. And I will say also that the Carver Center is doing really well, leaps and bounds from where even they were before. They're raising a lot of money, they're helping a lot of kids, especially during the pandemic, so. And I'll always -- everybody always talks about this, when Mr. Fuller was in the parades in Norwalk on Memorial Day, he was always more popular than any mayor was, whoever the mayor was.

ERIK CLEMONS: Yes, he was. I was a cub scout in a parade with him. [laughs]

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): I think every mayor was afraid that he would run for mayor one day.

ERIK CLEMONS: That's right.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, it's just -- I just want to ask one last question, sir, that we ask everybody. Is there anything in your past that might prove embarrassing to the Committee, the Governor or the State of Connecticut?

ERIK CLEMONS: There is not.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you, sir, we appreciate it, and thank you for --

ERIK CLEMONS: Thank you so much. Thank you all.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, next, and I hope I get this right, still. Resolution confirming Malia Sieve. Is that right? Okay, good. Of Waterford to be reappointed as a Member of the State Board of Education.

Malia, could you please just raise your right hand for me? You promise, swear, or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MALIA SIEVE: Yes.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, and then feel free to have an opening statement and followed by some questions.

MALIA SIEVE: Great. Thank you so much. And I want to just start off by saying I realize I have a very tough act to follow from both of my previous fellow board members. Good morning, Senator Duff Representative Greko, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy and Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Malia Sieve, and it's an honor and a privilege to be nominated by Governor Lamont to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

I'd like to express my sincere thanks, of course, to this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to speak to my desire to continue to serve on the State Board of Ed. I'm a proud wife and mother of 16-year-old twins Taylor and Dylan. We currently live in Waterford, and aside from my first year, I've been from Connecticut my entire life. And Senator Duff, I too in 1994 drove over to Norwalk, decided to live there for a year and thought, is this still Connecticut? [laughs]

I've benefited from a great public K-12 education from Ledyard and East Lyme and graduated from the University of Connecticut for both my undergraduate and graduate degrees. I earned my master's degree in social work with a focus on policy and planning. I've worked on many issues in my career thus far; domestic violence, juvenile justice, early childhood, K-12 and higher education to name a few. All of which have provided me with deeper understanding of the inequities between populations and the role of policy in creating and removing barriers.

I work for HCM strategists. It's an educational -- sorry, education policy consulting firm that happens to be based out of Austin Texas. We all work out of our houses across the country. I work with leaders and states to collaborate and improve educational outcomes for students, particularly in post-secondary education.

Prior to HCM, I worked for the Connecticut Board of Regents as a associate director of policy and research. While there, I primarily managed Connecticut's former pre-K through 20 Council and worked with leaders in K-12 and higher Ed, business, philanthropy and elected leaders to try to increase coordination and communication across these sectors to improve student outcomes.

My interest in continuing to serve on the Board of Education is to continue the imperative work of addressing the inequitable outcomes suffered by our students of color, English language learners and low-income students. We know that Connecticut has some of the largest gaps in the country. And now due to the pandemic, the challenges and gaps are exacerbated. So much of the conversation really that has happened this morning thus far.

I was excited to be a -- I was excited by the appointment of Commissioner Cardona. I was part of the board when conducting that search. And the opportunity to support a leader whose vision is squarely on addressing our state's equity issues. It is that kind of bold leadership that Connecticut needs. I am equally excited and committed to the strong team at the department, who I know is just as passionate about addressing these equity issues.

As Commissioner Cardona becomes Secretary Cardona, the board needs to continue to support the difficult path ahead to keep the attention on ensuring equitable outcomes for our least well served students as our moral and ethical obligations as human beings for the benefit of these students as

individuals of our communities and our state. This is what compels me to do this work, along with getting to actually sit with my colleague, like Eric Clemons, who we all enjoyed a conversation with.

The strength and vitality of our state depends on our commitment and ability to build our human capital across all races, ethnicities, spoken language and income brackets. I hope to continue to bring to the board my added voice and attention to addressing equity, my experience in working across sectors to build collaborations and my commitment to making Connecticut an even better place. Thank you again for this opportunity to introduce myself and share my interest in continuing to serve on the board of Ed.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it and congratulations on your nomination. Hopefully, you do get a chance to go to Austin every now and then. It's a great foody place and kind of a fun city. I've been there only once, but I enjoyed it down there but we're glad you're here in Connecticut and certainly glad that you've agreed to take on this role.

A question from your former role and the Board of Regents and what you did there in policy. How does that prepare you, you believe, for the role of being on the State Board of Ed? And sense of what you saw with higher Ed and how we can make that transition a better one and also, you know, as I had said last week at a press conference for the debt free Community college, we have to get out of this notion that education is K through 12. It's beyond that if we're going to have a highly educated workforce and one that has prepared for the jobs of the 21st century. So if you can just get in that a little bit of that experience and how that might enable you to be more effective on the State Board of Education.

MALIA SIEVE: Sure, thank you for that question. Yeah, it was about eight years ago that I left that role, but it was about three or four years of my life and really working on that P through 20 Ed Council in particularly that really is, I think, the piece that is worth focusing on. At that time, and it's not any different now, right, there is just a serious issue, right, when -- in students being able to transition from high school into whatever their next successful step is in life.

So much of our conversation -- the conversation that has been had this morning has been really addressing what is the right path and helping students to be able to find that right path for them, whether that's going directly into college or minimally preparing them for that option once they've graduated from high school, and find whatever path they are on.

Working with both, not both, but all sort of perspectives in terms of folks from business, folks from K12, folks from higher education to identify with them what are sort of the barriers in communications where the breakdowns happening that are keeping those students from being able to make those transitions.

Those sorts of conversations, that sort of bridge building, that sort of bringing folks together to stop pointing fingers quite honestly at each other to blame that it's someone else's fault for why the challenges exist but rather coming together in order to be able to think about what collectively do we understand of the challenges, and how do we collectively then come up with solutions. That's what I bring. I bring that that sort of multifaceted stakeholder perspective or a hunger to be able to understand all of those in order to help inform our discussions about what are those solutions, how do we support the field broadly to ultimately, support the success of students.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): No. I understood, and thank you. And, in your opinion, do you -- I don't mean to make this a loaded question. I'm just trying to figure out, you know, what can we do better to ensure that our kids who are graduating from high school are really prepared for college if they're going. I mean, I still believe that even if you're, you know, you're a electrician you should still go to college because if you're going to be a self-employed, you should understand how to pay -- you know, possibly expand your business or make sure you have a business plan and all those kinds of things that I think you can learn in school as well.

But, you know, we have a lot of kids who students who end up at either some of our state schools or community college or private schools who are not adequately prepared when they walk in the door, as a first-year student. What do you think we can do better in that regard to make sure that our kids are prepared and they don't have to take, I'd say a year or a semester of remediation, remedial classes, I guess?

MALIA SIEVE: Well, you let off with I don't mean to make that a loaded question, right. And I don't want to have my response imply that there's a simple answer to that. I mean, I think that there are many challenges, be them academic, be them financial, be them the -- what so much of the conversation has already been in terms of districts systems, teachers, administrators, understanding -- really going through this diversity equity inclusion space to understand what sorts of barriers are already being even inadvertently put in the place of students.

So I think the answer to that is not a simple one, I think we really need to understand what are those barriers. I think to some extent we know what those barriers are and need to be able to support the learning from across districts, highlighting what is working well and scaling that. And I think the

department has been doing a really good job at this over the past -- over the past time that I've been on in terms of trying to share out more broadly what are those best practices in order to be able to reduce that remediation need before students are exiting.

So I don't want to pretend as though I am an educator because I'm not. I just want to, I think, respect that there are people that are -- there are folks in districts that are doing this work, and being able to spread that knowledge across districts and highlight that is really where we need to continue to go.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, and I understand it was kind of a tough question and not one that has simple answer on for sure. I would just hope that it's more of a -- I would hope that the State Board of Ed, as we raise these issues in this Committee, would consider at least exploring these things a little bit more, a little bit further if they're not already, and that these are issues that the legislature is thinking about.

MALIA SIEVE: Could I -- can I speak --

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Sure, please.

MALIA SIEVE: One thing that I know that -- one thing that we have been doing -- the department has been doing of course is in using -- is in using data, right. So there is a P20 SLTS, P20WIN that allows us to actually to be looking at data that we have, you know, aside from several years ago had not been able to really pinpoint back, right, to be able to say where who -- where and who are the students, what can we learn about this from a data perspective to help us to better target what those -- what and where those sorts of interventions needs to happen. And also provide that opportunity for conversation between K-12 and higher education about what does college ready actually mean.

And so I think I fully agree with you. I think we need to -- we need to and will continue. And we have pressed continually in those presentations to the board to ask those sorts of questions to keep pushing -- to keep sort of pushing us to do more and better as we continue to dig into that sort of data.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): I appreciate that, thank you very much. I think your role that you're in now, but -- and especially your role that you had before with the Board of Regents and partner, you know, being on the State Board of Education puts you in a unique perspective to work on some of those issues. So thank you very much for your answers, I appreciate it. Representative Gresko, you have any questions at all?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, the question is for you. I need to go and vote at another Committee so I'm gonna ask for a rain check for when I come back.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Deal. All right. Anybody else have any questions? I don't see any virtual hands up, any blue hands on the screen. Oh, Representative Vargas, okay. Has a real hand up.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, you probably heard our -- Representative Godfrey comments and my comments during the last nominee's presentation. And, you know, we always hear about the fact that the public schools are failing some of our kids and we know who the kids are; the English limited kids, the kids that have special needs, kids that are facing dire poverty. So we have a pretty good handle on who they are, but we always hear the same thing, well, for whatever reasons, our public schools are not addressing the needs of these schools.

I just want to say I find that an unacceptable response. Whatever reasons -- no, there are specific reasons, and by now we should know what

those reasons are. We should have a plan on how to address it, and we should be well on our way to remediating these issues. Any thoughts on that?

MALIA SIEVE: Yeah. I completely agree with you. I think we have had in the State of Connecticut enough data for enough time to tell us exactly who the students are and you've identified them, right? I fear that we have lived for too long sort of allowing ourselves to sort of just be in this narrative of this is sort of what happens, and there needs to be action, and it needs to be, you know, it -- there's urgency. Every single moment there's another set of children that are falling behind and it's unacceptable.

We absolutely -- yeah, from the previous conversation the need to continue to invest in our education systems and not make excuses is top of mind for me. So yes, fully agree.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you for your response. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Rep -- Senator Formica, how are you today?

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Good morning, Mr. Chair. I'm well, thank you, and I hope you are the same. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, hi, how are you? Welcome. I came in a bit late from another Committee meeting, and while Senator Duff was talking to you about, you know, the need for everybody to go to college at some point. I think I halfway agree, although it's not fair for me to say because I didn't hear his full comments, but my concerns are training people who don't want to go to college and have the opportunity to go to trade school.

And, you know, years ago, we used to really push that in the high schools but we've gotten away from that over the years and have pushed specifically to,

you know, the measure of success from a high school is how many kids they send to college, not including trades. And I'm hopeful that we can kind of move back to trades and then use -- I think, Senator Duff was referring the community college system, but as a way to augment the opportunity for trade development for people, so.

I think it would be helpful for a lot of folks and I'm curious if in your opening statement, that I apologize that I missed, if you mentioned anything like that. If not, would you mind speaking to it for a minute?

MALIA SIEVE: Yeah, certainly, and I did not speak to it in my opening statement, so you did not miss a comment. The -- I agree, but I don't -- I've never thought that it is an either/or proposition in terms of being ready for success after high school. So I don't -- I firmly believe that as students are graduating from high school, whether it is in -- whether their intentions are trades or their intentions are going on to sort of a traditional college, everybody should still have a level of readiness. That we aren't cutting off any of their opportunities after they have left 12th grade if that makes sense, right.

So I agree we have generally sort of made it less -- we have very much pushed four-year degrees in this state. And sort of when we say the word college there's automatically this sort of presumption that we mean everybody needs to go and get a four-year degree. And you're right, we sort of measured things in that way, right. So prestige was based on and success of a high school was did they go to a four-year college, and anything else was seemingly lesser than. And we have to be able to get to a place where all paths, all options are just as wonderful for success after high school whether that's through trades, or whether that's through more of a liberal arts path. Absolutely.

I just want to make sure that every student isn't cut off from success because they were going to go to trades and not into a sort of a, like I said, more of a traditional or rather liberal arts pathway, right. As they graduate perhaps folks will want to go run their own business, there still needs a path and I don't want to cut that off for folks.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much. I agree, you know, wholeheartedly with you that we need to make sure people are prepared. The shift years ago of, you know, after freshman year perhaps moving into college prep, you know, I think kind of isolated some of the folks that may want to go into trade. And if we can get back to us in our hands a little bit and kind of working with programs within our high school, our public education system. You know, cause people may not know whether they want to go into trades in time to get into a high school, technical school. You know, many kids do and they're doing well, but as long as we keep open the opportunity to provide, you know, labs, if you will, for them to kind of get their, you know, their hands working in their minds and ideas that this may be our -- my future and I'm just not gonna do four more years of school.

So again, I thank you for your perspective on that, and if there's anything that we can do to support moving along, and I appreciate that your -- Congratulations on your service, especially coming from, you know, the greatest district in the state, so I thank you for that too.

MALIA SIEVE: Thank you. [laughs]

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Senator. She does have Norwalk ties, so we put an asterisk on that. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? I don't see any virtual hands up. I don't know if I see any real hands up at all. Any other questions from Members of the Committee? No. Okay, nobody

else. I see nobody flailing their hands, waving their hands on me. No? Okay, thank you.

Let me just ask the question. Is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, the Governor or the State of Connecticut?

MALIA SIEVE: No, not at all.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, thank you, thank you for your time and congratulations on your nomination.

MALIA SIEVE: Thank you so much.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Next, we're going to move to Resolution confirming Dr. Karen Dubois-Walton. Hopefully -- did I get that right? Okay.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): To be a Member of the State Board of Education. Would you please raise your right hand? And you promise, swear, or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: I do, thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you, and please feel free to have an opening statement followed by some questions.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Great. Thank you. Good morning Senator Duff, Representative Gresko, Senator Looney, Representative Quinn, Senator Kelly, Representative Kennedy and all Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I'm Karen Dubois-Walton, and I'm honored to be nominated by Governor Lamont to be a Member of the State Board of Education. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you my background and

interests, which I hope you'll find aligned to service on the Connecticut State Board.

Given the pandemic induced interruptions the past session, I am now before you having had the opportunity to serve on the board since February of 2020. In my time of appointment, I've been engaged in the revision of departments racial equity policy, approval of the new curriculum on Black, Latinx, Puerto Rican and Native history, accountability reviews of several Connecticut charter schools, COVID-19 pandemic response efforts, approval of the revised school guidance requirements, approval of bilingual educator and other certification revisions and more.

Serving during this time of multiple pandemics, the health crisis, the economic disruption, the racial equity reckonings has been both rewarding and an opportunity to bring my background and experiences in full service of Connecticut students and educators. I'm trained as a clinical psychologist who specialized in work with children and families experiencing trauma. My career path brought me through the Yale Child Study Center, to the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services before pivoting into public policy work and see government and currently in quasi-government environment of the local public housing authority, Elm City Communities or the housing authority in the city of New Haven. I served there as president for the past 14 years.

My professional pivot was for the express purpose of using my clinical and community psychology training to build strong and inclusive communities, places designed for families to thrive and not simply survive. At Elm City Communities we're using housing policy to create high quality, affordable communities in New Haven. Our communities are focused on the wellbeing of our residents with a full array of social services designed for the positive development of our youth, economic growth

of our adults and the highest quality of life for our elderly and disabled residents.

We have a deeply engaged in partnership with the education sector for many years, having launched our youth achievement programming, which we call home Elm City Communities Believes in 2014. Through ECC Believes we partner with students, families, schools, community agencies and more to create opportunities for all our children to thrive with the express focus being on breaking cycles of poverty for the families we serve.

Our integrated approach to housing policy and approach that incorporates housing stability with education, healthcare, employment and other outcomes is an approach that I bring to the Connecticut State Board. And in ways, similar to the history of housing policy in our state, the history of education policy has also been a history of inequity, disparities and discriminatory action. At Elm City Communities, we bring an equity lens to the work we do. We're seeking to address the inequities experienced today as a result of housing policy that limited opportunity for so many on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability status, immigration status and more.

This equity lens it's the same focusing tool that I bring to work in the education sector. I've been pleased to see that equity is the lens through which the Connecticut State Board of Education seeks to conduct its work as well.

Looking forward with your confirmation, I would anticipate bringing my expertise to assist in the development of the departments next five year plan, continued support of the Connecticut State Education goals through the selection of our next qualified Commissioner and support a succession planning efforts, contribution to the agency's development of policy and legislative proposals that will advance our equity based reforms and ensure that all our

children have the opportunity to succeed and that the outcomes reflect our efforts, continued support of the efforts to diversify the state's workforce and innovative ideas that will support the intersection of work between education policy and housing policy. So I thank you for your consideration, and I'm very pleased to answer any questions.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Great. Thank you so much. I'm going to yield to Senator Looney who has to go testify at another Committee.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Good morning.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Marty, take yourself off. Marty, you're on mute. Still on mute.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Wendy, can you do it?

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Okay, there you go. Can you hear me now?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): We can hear you, man.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): All right, thank you so much. Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the indulgence. I have to testify shortly in the Insurance and Real Estate Committee.

Welcome, Karen. I'm so pleased that -- your nomination. I think that you have a wealth of experience and advocacy, and I commend you on your leadership for Elm City Communities and your leadership in public policy in a variety of ways. In the city of New Haven for so many years, we've been fortunate to have you there.

A couple of questions, one of which I asked Mr. Clemons when he was here earlier. Given the fact that the state has been so highly supportive through its school construction program of the physical development of schools throughout the state, notably

in New Haven over a period of 15 years, and you were employed in the city during most of that time were \$1.6-billion-dollar construction program was undertaken to build so many new schools and renovate others of which 1.3 billion was paid for by the state because more than 80% of it was state funds.

We're now hearing in some cases that there are problems with maintenance, problems with upkeep and HVAC systems because that is being brought to the attention of everyone in terms of whether the schools are safe to re-enter. What is your view on the accountability of local school systems and boards of Ed to make sure that the state, which is the funding source for so much of that school construction money through the State Board of Ed and the approval for those projects that are then -- go from the state Board of Ed through the school construction Bill. What kind of accountability should there be in terms of reporting, auditing at the state level to make sure that we don't have failures in maintenance to compromise the huge state investment that was made in many of these school systems where the large chunk of the cost has been borne by the state?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Senator, good morning. It's good to see you, and thank you for your kind words and thank you for the question. I am here at Elm City Communities; I am responsible for a very similar sort of public investment. As you know, we're -- we are responsible for ensuring that the tax dollar -- taxpayer dollars are used. And we've been doing incredible investment to rebuild portfolio. So I'm very mindful of that responsibility and the accountability that comes with such investments. We make those investments, whether in housing or in the schools, as you're asking about, so that we can provide the highest quality for our learners, for our students.

I think we have the responsibility to ensure we make those investments that ensure that we have the

appropriate operating budgets to allow for the preventative maintenance that needs to happen, the ongoing routine maintenance to be able to respond to those sorts of emergencies. And so we all have that responsibility to make sure we funded systems appropriately to do what we're asking them to do. And then that system has the responsibility of being accountable for those dollars and ensuring that they have been used effectively.

And I do believe that part of accountability is providing appropriate information to funding sources and to those that are interested that the funding sources and authorizing bodies have the responsibility to follow up and look and whether those are reviews or audits. I do believe that that is a two-way street.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Well, thank you very much. As I know, in New Haven, the commitment was to try to build a schools that were not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and beautiful because we had the commitment to say that since learning is such an important enterprise, probably the most important enterprise that the government provides in so many ways through its teaching capacity, that the facilities in which the students learn should reflect that. That they should be beautiful buildings as well as functional buildings. That kids should be proud to go to school in, that teachers should be proud to work in, administrators should be proud to manage in. And all of that depends on the ongoing maintenance, as well as on the initial creation.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes. Here, here.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): And just one other question for you. In terms of what we've seen over recent years, and probably most dramatically so with the terrible attack on the US Capitol on January six by many people who have -- were either misled by conspiracy theories or misled by the then President

or not understanding the values and traditions of our democracy and the uniqueness of the American system, and our democracy being a beacon and a light to the world. Sadly, many of those people, I assume, were graduates of various public-school systems around the country, who never learned or never took to heart the essence of what it means to be in a democracy.

And I was wondering what your thoughts might be on the obligation of the public schools to really have a highly developed, highly sophisticated teaching for us that brings civics education to every aspect of teaching. In other words, not only those who are teaching civics or government classes, but every teacher in every subject, I think, should be knowledgeable about the fundamental obligations and principles of democracies and in view every class with that, not those just that are going to be earmarked as government or social studies classes, or something like that. Because my impression has been, and just in meeting with students who are recent graduates of our high schools in different parts of the state, that their fundamental education in the principles of democracy is lacking. Somehow, they have not either been taught or not absorbed those lessons in the way that they should have.

Just your thoughts on that. I'd like to hear what you think the state should be doing to foster that at the local level and to make sure that our students don't graduate from high school and become voting members of society without the functional preparation, knowledge and understanding about why our system is so precious and why we should be committed to guard it.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes, thank you. Senator Looney, one of the reasons why I believe housing policy and education policy are things that I'm passionate about and are so closely linked, well, they are so closely linked. Also relates to an aspect of your question here. You know, we have

segregated schools today because we live in segregated communities. And that segregation prevents us from having the kind of interaction where we learn about each other and we learn each other's history. And it's one of the reasons why I highlighted the new history curriculum as being a real step forward for the state, a way in which the state has lead.

I think we need to understand our history in a broader way than we've understood it before, and I think that needs to happen across all age levels, across all schools in our district. In a similar way, I think we have to understand our country and our country's role in the rest of the world in relation to the history of the rest of the world.

And so part of that is certainly an integration into all aspects, not one class on civics but in all aspects of education from our earliest pre-K little ones beginning to understand, through the young people that we're graduating and sending off into the world ready with a K-12 education diploma. That understanding of the democracy and civics needs to be integrated in that.

I think the state board and through the support of the State Legislature has the opportunity to set those -- the frame and the parameters that then every district needs to actually implement on the ground in terms of effective curriculum. So I think the state can absolutely lead in its -- in what's designed in teacher preparation programs, and what candidates who want to be teachers need to be exposed to, studied in, proficient in, so that they -- were bringing into the classroom. So I think that's one place that the State legislature, state government can have a role.

And then as we're thinking about what -- how we're hiring and selecting into districts, I think there's guidance that can be provided and parameters that can be set for what we expect around teacher

criteria. And then I think on the curriculum side as well in a similar way to, you know, other things that we have said must be a part of Connecticut curriculum. Strengthening our teachings and the way in which we integrate civics, democracy, understands of citizenship into our curriculum I think is another place where the state board can play a role.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Good. Well, thank you very much for that response. I think it's critical because apparently and unfortunately, many, many homes don't provide that context of a civics education to their children. The parents themselves are deficient in that knowledge, therefore that's a vacuum that that has to be filled in by the schools, I think. And that's one of the fundamental responsibilities, I think of a public education.

I know it was one of the original missions when public school systems were being established in many areas where there was attention to the education of immigrant children in the 19th century. There was a great deal of concerned that how are these immigrants going to become knowledgeable American citizens because they don't come from nations that had the democratic tradition that the United States had, and at least their children needed to be educated in democracy, even if the parents coming here had not grown up in that culture. But unfortunately, it seems to me that people born in the United States are just as much in need of that education as immigrants are. And we need to make sure that that is provided, and the -- As in so many other areas, the default level to provide that is going to be our schools where it's not provided in the home.

So thank you very much for your interest in that and your commitment to that, and I look forward to your service on the board. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for your indulgence, letting me go first. I'll be back later on to vote once I've testified in the other Committee. Thank you so much.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Senator. I'm always happy to oblige, no problem. I will yield to others right now. I do have some questions at the end. Representative Gresko, any questions? And if anybody else have questions, please either raise your virtual hand or put your hand in front of the camera so I can see. Thanks.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair I just had one question, and I'm wondering how you on the State Board of Education could advise or set an example locally to assess if our students -- I don't even know how to say it, need to catch up. I mean, we can't do a mulligan, a 2020 mulligan. So how do you know that the at home, online learning has prepared the students enough to advance on to the next grade level?

Senator Duff made mention of it earlier when some students go to the first year in college, they oftentimes have to take a remedial class just to kind of catch up. But to make -- you know, through no fault of their own, you know, the pandemic happened, and everyone needed to adapt, but we -- how was it -- how are we going to judge how that adaptation worked?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes, thank you for the question, Representative Gresko. You know, I think we have to not ask the question of whether our children's learning was impacted but accept that. From last March to today has been a complete upheaval to the way in which we have approached our children's learning to this point. And so it requires some very new strategies, and I think we should accept that things have been very different and that that requires some very different and creative responses to that.

And so, you know, each district right now there's, you know, additional round of federal funding that's coming in. Each district is charged with doing planning processes, and I think we should really be looking for really creative and responsive plans out of that process that addresses the fact that there has been a disruption and changes. And that the goals that educator set prior to the pandemic for what was gonna be achieved during the last school year and this school year are -- have been impacted and may change.

And I think those plans need to put in place creative ways of providing additional support to learners who are continuing to be remote and working in the hybrid, as well as those that are in the classroom. It was mentioned earlier when one of my colleagues was testifying about the need for the extended day and summer opportunities. I think we need to go into it knowing that we need to provide that. I think we need to go into it ready for the social emotional supports that are needed. This has been hugely disruptive to the mental health, mental wellbeing of educators, families, caregivers, as well as our learners.

It -- you know I am horrified at the rate -- the rise, nationwide the rise in suicide rates among young people through this pandemic. So we have to have plans that address that mental wellbeing, social emotional aspect, as well and certainly the recovery, the learning loss and the recovery.

And I think we're going to be measuring that based upon the work that educators do in the classroom each day with their learners where they are setting individual goals for learners and working with their -- with the students under their care around progress conversation and communication with families and support around that progress as well so that we can put each of our learners on that path to catch up what's been met and around a reset.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you. Thank you for that answer, and thank you, Mr. Chair. I will yield to other, more qualified individuals on education.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you, Representative.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right. Representative Kennedy followed Senatore Moore, followed by Representative Vargas.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dubois-Walton. Dubois-Walton. Sorry. And I appreciate your very thoughtful responses today. One of the questions, and we've talked about it a lot in legislation, we have had some legislation passed, but how do you see the State Department Board of Education recruiting and retaining teachers of color? It's been talked about a lot, and I'm just wondering what your thoughts and your role on the State Board of Education would be?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you. My spouse is probably cheering that you asked this question. This is one of the things that he does in his professional life so I've been hearing about this for years as he's worked around this. So, you know, a few things.

One, I think we all can play a role as a community in creating energy around the education workforce and making it something that our young people consider as a career early and get excited about. And that requires some narrative change that we all, as citizens of this state, can play a role in cheering and encouraging our -- the educators in our world and in our lives and helping our young people see that as a path that they want to go into.

I think we can start very early with teacher -- with programs as early as middle school. That are those sorts of teacher preparatory kind of programs that get kids interested in education, and supporting them, mentoring them. There are nationwide programs

that do that sort of work starting at middle school that really show that clubs -- future teacher clubs and that kind of thing really starts to spark some energy around that. I think we can do that with a specific focus on our underrepresented groups, so ensure that we have black boys in those groups and black girls in those groups and Latinx kids in those groups and Native kids in those groups, right, so that we're building that. So I think we can start really early in doing that.

As we think about kids going into college, I think we can think about the kinds of scholarships and grants and financial support that really incentivize young people wanting to consider that career and remove some of the concern about student debt. Also knowing that our teaching workforce, especially the early years may not be as well compensated as some other career paths that they might be considering. So financial aid support grants can help in that way as well.

I think we've got a great core within our schools already that are working as paraeducators, paraprofessionals that often have the college degree already that could use some support. And there been some great steps by the state made already around how to create the support for the teacher -- from paraprofessional moving from that position into the education workforce, and I think we can really support that pipeline. People who are already in the building, already trusted by students, sometimes playing a really significant role in this -- in the education system already but doesn't have the certification credentials, and I think we can create and support some of those pathways.

I think we can do more as a state around recruitment and really focusing on some of the HBC, the colleges and universities that serve predominantly African American and Latinx students, and really create a pipeline there of programs that really attract so that when, you know, somebody from one of our

districts goes down to Howard University in DC that there's something that's attractive to the student that makes them stay at Connecticut as opposed to all the other places that are trying to pull them. So I think we can do some things along those lines as well.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Wow, that was awesome and I think your partner will be extremely proud of you. That --

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: I listen well.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): You listen well. No, it's exactly -- I sit on the Teacher of the Year State Committee and it's a lot of the responses. We have to reach the kids at early ages in the middle schools and show them what a wonderful fulfilling career it could be for them.

So I thank you very much for spending your morning with us and for you continuing to be a member of the State Department of Education. Thank you so very much.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Moore, followed by Representative Vargas.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Thank you. First of all, I have no idea, Mr. Chairman, as to what a 2020 mulligan is.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: A do-over.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Oh okay. [laughter]

REP. GRESKO (121ST): I didn't get that word. I didn't get that word.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): I hope I interpreted it correctly. I understand it to be a do-over.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Yes, a do-over. We -- a do-over.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Okay. So good morning, getting close to the afternoon, it's a pleasure.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Good morning.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): I've been in your company before in a couple of different places, so it's great to have you here. I do want to say I am so impressed with some of the things that you've said and when you talk about diversity and inclusion and racial equity and your ideas. Part of that is because I promised everybody that I've been around that I will say this until I see it happen, I'm looking through everything through a racial equity lens that I do this year. That will be my mantra for the whole year for everything that we do, and I heard you repeat it over and over again.

There's a couple of things I wanted to ask you about. You're sitting on the Committee to look at equity, racial equity. Can you tell me what you see what are the biggest challenges to be able to integrate equity and talking about all cultures within the curriculum, can you share some of that?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes, so thank you. And, you know, and one of your colleagues asked earlier, you know, that -- or indicated earlier, like I'm tired of hearing that we don't know what to do. I think we do have some very solid plans within the Connecticut State Board that are in place and that need to be -- need to continue to move forward to really create this opportunity where all our learners are having the opportunity to thrive in the way. And part of that requires us having culturally responsive educators and culturally responsive curriculum, culturally relevant curriculum, right.

And so one of the barriers is that first, you know, when we started trying to apply a racial equity lens, we have to all acknowledge that there's been a tremendous amount of miseducation that we've been subject to ourselves around history and learning. So one of the barriers is just that there's a lot of unlearning that has to happen in order to do those sorts of the new learning. We have to undo some old ways in order to create new ways of being together, new ways of learning, new frames for history that we learned a certain way. That's more inclusive that encompasses a range of different viewpoints.

So I think there's someone unlearning that has to happen and a willingness for each of us to do that unlearning and learn together. We have to each confront our own biases. It's not like other people have bias and we don't, right. We have to all acknowledge the bias that we hold and then not be held hostage by that bias. Once we've acknowledged it, then we can sharpen our vision around it because we can see when it's popping up and see that that's implement -- impacting the way we're seeing something, and that gives us freedom to be able to make some different choices.

So I think there's work that we all need to do within our educational systems around understanding bias and addressing bias and moving beyond the limitations that bias creates so that we can do that unlearning and relearning and offer different curriculum. And I think we have to embrace the range of different cultural experiences and learning styles that are in our classrooms and have a teaching for course that's fluid enough and adept enough to be able to engage in different ways and connect to the experience of the learner that's in front of them.

I think if we can do those things. I think we can really begin to make some strides in young people feeling really connected to their education, feeling

like they're cared in learning things that are relevant to them. And I think if we're doing that, along with all the wonderful things that have been discussed today around having different pathways to college, to technical career, to -- Right, if we do all of those kinds of things, I think we will find that we are connecting to a group of young people that have felt very left behind in our district -- in our districts, and have not been achieving at the level that we know that they're capable of.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): So over the last four years between government and the pandemic, I think this is an opportunity for us to shift in how we think about many, many things. I see the opportunities being endless, right. And I think about the education system that we're in now was built so long ago that it may not be appropriate for this new world that I believe we have the opportunity to build, that we can now build what we would like to have but based on what we've learned from the past of what didn't work, and that that system wasn't built for everyone, right. It was only built for some to succeed.

I listened to Representative Vargas talk about charter schools and Representative Godfrey talk about it. I'm in like in the middle of the books. All I want is a great education and opportunity for everyone and let them choose a path, but I also want equitable in the way of if it's going to be state funded, it's state funded, right. You want to do the other, it's a private school then. I want my state dollars to be equitable for every child and I don't want to be siphoned off at someone be able to get supplemental dollars to make theirs better than -- what they call better than public schools. But I also think that's part of this equation, we need to really look at what our schools look like, how are they funded and that we are able to sustain that funding.

So I see -- I heard you mentioned new strategies and creative responses. I think that really is important to the future of education. That what worked for me, I think I'm in Rep. Godfreys' age group that I heard him mention his age that I understand. I had a really good education, not a great one but in public school I had a good one, right. And I lived in a very diverse integrated neighborhood that it just seemed normal the -- to be able to have Irish stew one day and pasta the next, right, and pork chops the next day, right. We were just all living together in this community and we have self-segregated ourselves, right, but we have to take all those things into consideration about what the new world looks like and what we're gonna create.

And so I'm wondering, are you open to looking at revamping our school systems to be able -- and I think this is more of a 20-year plan. I don't think you can get there overnight, but a long-term plan on how we revamp the school systems and how our children learn and what the state can do to support those. Can you -- do you see a vision for that?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Oh, I think I'm absolutely open to, you know, what I talked about is transformational change. I don't think we're -- You know the best way to get the same results that we've gotten over time is to keep doing the same things we've been doing over time, right. And so if we're not happy with the results we're getting it requires us to really take a look at what needs to change around that. And I don't think it's just tinkering around the edges; I think there are some big bold things that we'll need to do differently because our children's lives are at stake here.

We cannot afford to leave behind large segments of our population because they are lower income, or large segments of our population because they are Latinx or they are African American, and only look at the positive Connecticut education outcomes and

ignore the fact that it's not that for everybody. And so that is going to require us doing things very differently, and I am certainly open to that and supportive of a state board that is open to working in that way, and a partnership with the legislature that works in that way.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): So thank you. I really look forward to hearing more from you and see what comes out of this State Board of Education with some new people, new thoughts and thinking differently about the future of Connecticut, not rubber stamping what we've done in the past. But I do appreciate this and I look forward to working with you, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you. Good to see you, Senator. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Senator Moore. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Karen for all the work you're doing. And as I told other nominees for the State Board of Education, I believe this is a time we need to double down on improving our public schools. Reemphasize the fact that we need to address the shortcomings of our public schools, and that should be our number one priority. It's not the time to throw in the towel and give up on our public schools. That would be a terrible, terrible mistake, I believe.

And just quickly on another issue, the issue of Latinx. You may not be aware of this and it may not be your responsibility completely but it's an issue of the Latino community and the Hispanic organizations around the country have announced as something coming outside the community and being imposed on the community.

I've had conversation with friends who have tried to justify this on a couple of grounds, one, the fact that Hispanics come from different national cultural traditions, Peruvians, Dominicans, and therefore the X stands for that. I've had other friends have tried to explain this in terms of gender and sexual orientation, but it really doesn't make any sense because all those arguments could be equally applied to the black community. We have Haitians, we have people with the southern black experience, we have African immigrants, Jamaicans, West Indians. In the Asian community we have Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Koreans, Cambodians, people from Thailand. And they equally represent different national and different cultural traditions, and they also represent different genders and sexual orientation too, yet nobody has tried to impose Black X or Asian X on those communities or Native American X.

So I would just caution you that you're gonna get push back on this issue. The Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus has taken a position against this term as an insulting term. And several Mexican American, Cuban American, Dominican American organizations have taken a position against this term. So it will be an emerging issue, but it seems like something that some cultural elites thought up and are trying to impose in the community. It did not come organically out of the Hispanic Community.

It took us a long time to get used to terms like Hispanic and Latino but there's a push back on this Latinx term. I just wanted you to be aware of that. Thank you.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Well, I very much appreciate that, Representative Vargas. And, you know, in alignment with everything that I said, I have to be open to learning, and so you have just shared something with me that I am happy to take in and appreciate your -- offering that to me. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative Vargas. And --

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, sir. And Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you Karen for being here and stepping up to the State Board of Education. I like your attitude and your approach and your knowledge and practicality.

I do have a question and I do support the Latino and African American studies for our school systems. The curriculum should be in the school systems now. I don't know if it is or isn't. If -- could you let me know if it has been, and -- can you hear me?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes. Yes.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Hi. So I do support that and I have a follow up question after but the curriculum has it started? And I didn't remember if it's just going to be in the high schools or it's gonna be all through K through 12.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Right, so the curriculum was just a pro -- so the legislation was for a high school level class. And the curriculum was just approved and now we'll be rolling out, so I -- in the upcoming school year I think you'll start to see school districts getting that guidance, the framework of the classroom that was developed in partnership with cirque and the State Board of Ed and beginning to roll out.

And as to the where it starts, you know, I would love to see it, starting from pre-K.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: All the way through and being a required part of curriculum, so I think that's for us to work toward. It's not there yet.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): I agree. One thing I am surprised, indigenous or Indian, Indians, Native Americans there's no study, real studies. I studied it myself quite a bit. I've many books on my counter right now. Is there any reason why there's no thought of that, like the true studies of America, you know, indigenous or American Indians? Or -- I hate to use the term but that's -- indigenous folks of Connecticut, I mean, United States.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yes.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Of America, not of United States, of America.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Right, so I don't want to misspeak, but I do believe that native American history is included in the work that sort of put together but let me make sure of that before I give you a statement on that, but I'm certainly aligned with you that our history needs to reflect all of the contributions, and this is land that originally is a native land and we can't have history without acknowledging that.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right. The tragic history. So back to, I think, was Senator Looney mentioned civics, I on a regular basis go through all of our K, like third grade, fourth grade, the middle school, high school and then on high school does civics, teaches civics and I think they do a good job, at least in North Haven. But I've also run a church stream in Hamden, that I don't -- think it might be closed out [indiscernible] school, was more of an impoverished area, but I knew a friend there so I used to go speak to kids there. Many kids are actually better versed than I thought, at least high school students than their parents, unfortunately,

but I think it's vitally important to truth -- teach true civics along with the other studies. I think it's required at all high schools. Am I correct?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: So I so agree with you around the connection of civics and history, and I do think that I'm very impressed with our young people coming up.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: This next generation and their awareness. And I think, you know, for me, one indication that we've nailed it on civics education would be if we saw people exercising their right to vote at the level that the population would suggest. If we saw people, you know, contacting you all on things that they cared about in the -- to the degree that we believe there's interest out there on matters.

People, you know, some people come out for local hearings or for your hearings. I think when we start to see that kind of engaged community, I think then we'll feel like -- to me personally, I would feel like okay, we're doing something right in civic, like we really nailed that civics thing when we start to see those kinds of connections.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): You know, when I speak to kids, I never talk about which way to vote but just, you know, your voice matters.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Right.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): At 10 years old, 15 years old, 20 years old, any age, but just get educated as far as what you want to speak about.

One last thing and I want to really thank you again, but we've been in perpetual problem and mainly the urban areas for many, many years. And I know people try, but we still have not gotten out of these

deficiencies in many cases. And I just wish somehow, you know, we -- I said to Mr. Clemons, it's about hope and opportunity. And many times, unfortunately, people lose that hope and they then without the hope they're not gonna get the opportunity. And there's no one size fits all, but at the end of the day, it's about what Senator Moore and I said it earlier to Mr. Clemons, getting education.

Obviously, you want to support our public schools and we all do, but if you're gonna get you -- it's -- The bottom line is getting a good education and being involved and being hopeful and curious, and there's no one silver bullet, you just get -- have that hope. And I love our teachers, they do a great job but many times are so many pitfalls that -- either social issue, family issues, other issues that you're not just a teacher any longer, there are many facets.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Yeah. No, I think that, you know, the role of the State Legislature, the role of this Committee, the role of State Board to set a tone and to determine things that are gonna be acceptable and things that are not acceptable and to see how that translates then into policy on the ground, I think it's been important.

I'll just use an example; this state took a hard look at disciplinary practices and who was being excluded from the classroom. And even at the pre-k to K to -- pre-K to second grade level, and said, right, that something was unacceptable about the number of kids that were being excluded from education. And since like paying attention to that, looking at the racial disparities around that, shining a light on it and saying that that's not acceptable, we began to see very significant declines in the number of kids that are excluded from our education setting, right.

And I think -- I just use it as an example that there are ways in which we identify things, see the disparity, see the impact on or make the connection to the impact on education, right. Kids that are out of the classroom obviously are not learning in the same way that they could be in the classroom. And then -- and by making public policy statements around that, passing laws about it and forcing and tracking it, I think we've begun to see movement, and I think there are a lot of areas that we can point to and continue -- where we're making progress and continue to hone in on other areas.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): One last question, and I don't know if this is your purview but teachers that are college, obviously, they'd be pre-teaching. Do you feel they're being -- the curriculum for them in college is suitable to today's society?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: It's a place, I think, for greater alignment, right, as we're talking about teaching for civics or we're talking about teaching for the history that reflects the experience of all of us in this state and all of us in our country. I think there are places where we can better align. As we're talking about trying to hone in on these disparities, I think there ways that we can ensure that we're graduating from teacher preprograms educators who are prepared to work in those space. So I think we've got some great higher Ed programs doing great work and they're in partnership around trying to figure out what's their role in closing the disparity -- ending the disparities and the gaps that we see.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you so much and appreciate your time and your effort for our State Board of Education.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Representative. Thank you. I just have one question. My first one, I'll just say that one of my -- I would imagine that might be the case for most of the folks on this Zoom and the Committee is that my favorite classes were always civics and current events 'cause it was understanding. And I thought, actually, you know, we talked about civics, current events is, I think, very important because it allows, and back then, you know, back in the 19s, as my kids like to say. The -- you know, we ended up reading news week every week and understanding how, what happens in another country affects us here in the United States and it ties that all in together.

And so, you know, that I think is -- those kinds of things are important. You get a broader view of why, you know, as Senator Looney said, why voting matters because of the fact that you understand, you know, America's role or what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong and what we could be doing better.

And I also, you know, when the pandemic is over and it's obviously always according to budget, but the best way to expand the mind and expand the heart is also to travel. And ways in which we can get kids who may not have the ability to do that, provide them opportunities in some ways to expand their horizons because it really does -- you know, we have, as you probably know, in communities in Connecticut. I mean, we -- I have kids in Norwalk who live two miles from the beach who never been on Long Island Sound so we've got a lot of work to do before we can send them probably, you know, out of the country, but we should be keeping our eyes on those goals because those do end up making, I think better citizens when they have an expanded view of not only what's in their own backyard, but what's around the world, and how that impacts them.

I would just mention that, you know, everybody asked a lot of the questions I was going to ask, but I appreciate your work on what you've done with the various curricula for the State Board of Ed. And that that needs to continue and we have to integrate that more into our roles from, you know, K through high school and teach history as it was, and in a way that lets us all understand history and not just a certain view of history.

I mean, we're still learning today, and I am learning, as we all are, things that none of us ever knew through our own school books and textbooks. And those kinds of things, I think, are going to be important, whether you're in elementary school or high school because you just can't teach those kinds of things in high school when the foundation is not a foundation that is one to be able to absorb that or be able to understand or appreciate some of the various pieces of history we've had in this country and around the world as well. So I think you're on the right track and I certainly appreciate, you know, your role and your view on what you're trying to do with the State Board of Education, so we just want to say thank you for that.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you, Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): You're welcome. And so I don't have any further questions so I'm just looking for my script here. Just want to say there's one last question. Is there anything in your past that you believe might prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or the State of Connecticut?

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: No, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. Thank you so much, we appreciate it.

KAREN DUBOIS-WALTON: Thank you all. I appreciate your time.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Congratulations on your nomination. Okay, I don't think there's anybody -- any other questions at all for that, and so we can -- Madam Clerk, I think we can adjourn the public hearing. Is that correct? And we can now -- when you're ready technologically, we can move to our meeting. Are we good?

WENDY FRITZ: We are good.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, so we'll call the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee meeting to order. Representative Gresko, is there any comments you'd like to make?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): No, sir. Good to go.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay, great. All right, so first order of business is the resolution confirming Bonnie Burr of Brookfield to be a member of the State Board of education, is there a motion?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): So moved.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative Gresko. Is there a second?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Second.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Second by Representative Vargas. Any discussion? If not, Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah. Senator Duff yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Gresko yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly. Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Kennedy yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino. Senator Fonfara. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Formica votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley. Senator Kushner. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Perillo.
Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yaccarino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH): Senator Somers votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: That's the roll.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you. We're gonna hold the votes open till three o'clock today for other Members who have other Committee meetings. Next item is resolution confirming Eric Clemons of New Haven to be a Member of the State Board of

Education. Is there a non -- is there a motion to approve?

REP. GODFREY (110TH): So moved.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Second, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative Godfrey, seconded by Representative Kennedy. Any discussion? Seeing none, Madam Clerk, please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Gresko yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly. Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino. Senator Fonfara. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Formica votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley. Senator Kushner. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Perillo.
Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino
votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH): Senator Somers votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. That's the roll.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Madam Clerk. Next
is the resolution confirming Malia Sieve of
Waterford to be reappointed as a Member of the State
Board of Education, do I have a motion?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): So moved.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative
Vargas. Is there a second? Second by Senator
Formica. Any discussion? Seeing none, Madam Clerk,
please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Gresko yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly. Representative
Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative D'Agostino. Senator Fonfara. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Formica votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Godfrey yes.

WENDY FRITZ: You said it too fast, sir, so your picture didn't pop up.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): How about now?

WENDY FRITZ: Now I see you.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. Senator Hartley. Senator Kushner. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: The same thing happened. I don't see your picture; I see Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): I'm sorry, what was the question?

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Moore needs to stay hers' again.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Oh, I thought you said my name.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore votes yes. Can you see me?

WENDY FRITZ: Now I can. So just say your vote over again, please.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you so much.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): You're welcome.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Perillo.
Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino
votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Vargas

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes,
yes.

WENDY FRITZ: And Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH): Senator Somers votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Madam Clerk, next resolution
is resolution confirming Karen Dubois-Walton to be a
Member of the State Board of Education. Is there a
motion?

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): So moved, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Moved by Representative
Kennedy, and second -- is there a second?

REP. QUINN (82ND): I second.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Seconded by Representative
Yaccarino. Any discussion? None? Madam Clerk,
please call the roll.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Senator Duff votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Gresko votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Looney. Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Representative Quinn votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Kelly. Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Representative Kennedy yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representatives D'Agostino. Senator Fonfara. Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Formica votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (110TH): Godfrey votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Senator Hartley. Senator Kushner. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE (22ND): Senator Moore votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Perillo votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Representative Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Representative Yaccarino votes yes. Could you see me?

WENDY FRITZ: Yes. Representative Vargas.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Representative Vargas votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: And Senator Somers.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH): Senator Somers votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: That's the roll.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Madam Clerk. I think Senator Kelly is trying to get in to -- somebody can let him in? We'll be holding the votes open until three o'clock. Madam Clerk, can you give us the announcement of the time and date of the next meeting?

WENDY FRITZ: Next meeting follow by -- next public hearing followed by meeting will be on February 23rd, time to be announced.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Okay. All right, everybody, February 23, time to be announced, and we thank you all for joining us today. Be safe and talk to you soon. Thank you, everybody.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Bye. Thank you.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Bye. Bye.

WENDY FRITZ: Anyone who needs to vote? Or Senator Perillo, you can stay on I'll take your vote.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thanks, Wendy.

WENDY FRITZ: Bye, bye.

NICK BOMBACE: Thank you, Wendy. If you need anything, you know how to find me.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Where did Perillo go?

WENDY FRITZ: I don't know, and I just got a message that says Senator Kelly is trying to get in but he always -- I always send it to two different emails and he never has a problem unless he's at a 30 now.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): What do you want me to do, forward my link to him or that won't work?

WENDY FRITZ: No, forwarding links never works. That's always what the problem is when somebody can't get in.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Okay.

WENDY FRITZ: Webinar invitations are unique. If you forward, it will not work, he may be on a third, you know.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): And I also texted Representative D'Agostino about the votes being held open till three, so he's hopefully aware and will vote sooner rather than later. You're muted. Okay. Well, I've gotta run to another Zoom meeting but I'll check back with you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Wendy? Enjoy.

WENDY FRITZ: Sorry about that. Can you hear me?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Hi, can you hear me now?

WENDY FRITZ: Yep.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): I can barely hear you. I'm on my phone and I have my volume all the way up but I can't hear you very well.

WENDY FRITZ: Is this better?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): A little.

WENDY FRITZ: Let me see if I can turn my volume up a little. Is this better?

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Yeah, I can hear you I think and enough for the vote.

WENDY FRITZ: Okay, hold on just one sec. You can text me and tell me that you're in there, I was just answering an email, so.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Oh, okay. You know, I wonder if you could also send the Zoom links to my -- the Zoom link for this to my -- in the future to my personal email because when I'm on my laptop for work, I can be on the other personal computer.

WENDY FRITZ: Absolutely.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): It'll be easier than doing it from my phone.

WENDY FRITZ: You can text me or have your aid send me that and I'll add it to every invitation from now on.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. I'm, you know, I'm sharing a meeting -- a hearing today so, that's why I wasn't there.

WENDY FRITZ: No problem. I do it for other people. The first one is Bonnie Burr to be a Member the State Board of Education. Bonnie Burr.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): And I assume that everyone voted yes. I know you've told me that in the past.

WENDY FRITZ: Yeah.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you. Yes. Senator Kushner votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons, State Board of Education.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Senator Kushner votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: And Karen Dubois-Walton to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Senator Kushner votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Great. All set.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you.

WENDY FRITZ: Oh wait. I think there's one more.
I'm so sorry. Malia Sieve to be a Member of the
State Board of Education

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Senator Kushner votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you, that's all of them.

SENATOR KUSHNER (24TH): Thank you, Wendy. Have a
good day.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Wendy, if you need me to.

WENDY FRITZ: Yep. Same thing too, you can text me
and let me know you're ready to vote and then you
don't have to sit on here. Okay.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Wendy, are these all
Senate? Do you need to be [indiscernible] vote on
this?

WENDY FRITZ: What's that?

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Are these all-Senate
Resolutions?

WENDY FRITZ: Senate Joint.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Oh joint. Okay.

WENDY FRITZ: Otherwise, I wouldn't have to bother
you.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Got you.

WENDY FRITZ: Malia Sieve. Member --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): D'Agostino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons. State Board of
Education --

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): D'Agostino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Karen Dubois-Walton.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): D'Agostino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Bonnie Burr. State Board of
Education.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): And D'Agostino votes yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you very much.

REP. D'AGOSTINO (91ST): Don't need to thanks,
Wendy.

WENDY FRITZ: Any time. Take care. Hello.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Hi, Madam Clerk. How are
you?

WENDY FRITZ: I'm well. Thank you. You found it.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Yes, I did. Okay. I'm not
too good at all of this. I'm always floundering.

WENDY FRITZ: That's okay. I use one Zoom entity
for both things. It just works for this Committee,
so.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): I agree.

WENDY FRITZ: And it's easier, so.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Simplicity, yes. So anyway, crazy day. Good job like always Wendy. Thank you. Thank you.

WENDY FRITZ: No problem. I hope it's working for everybody on the Committee.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Yeah, no you've --

WENDY FRITZ: So

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): You've been great. Thanks for helping in Commerce too.

WENDY FRITZ: Oh, no problem. It's a pleasure. Senator Hartley, we have the nomination of Karen Dubois-Walton to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Senator Hartley in the affirmative.

WENDY FRITZ: Malia Sieve to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Senator Hartley in the affirmative.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Hartley in the affirmative.

WENDY FRITZ: And Bonnie Burr to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Hartley in the affirmative.

WENDY FRITZ: And that's it. You're off the hook.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Okay, thanks. Be well.

WENDY FRITZ: You too. Thank you so much.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Okay. Take care. Bye, bye.

WENDY FRITZ: Bye. Hi, Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Wendy?

WENDY FRITZ: Hi there.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): How you doing?

WENDY FRITZ: Good.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): How you doing?

WENDY FRITZ: I heard you had some trouble getting on today.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): I didn't quite get that.

WENDY FRITZ: I heard you had some trouble getting on today.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yeah, my WIFI connections are just horrible.

WENDY FRITZ: Oh okay. It wasn't the link, right?

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): No, no. It's not on your end. I talked on our end. I got two -- I've got Optimum and Verizon, and both are having problems. It's like it --- and it's both here and it works, so I don't know -- although I don't live that far away from where I work, so it's like a [inaudible]

WENDY FRITZ: Ah nuts. Looks like you froze there for a moment. But you're back.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yeah, see that's what happen. Like I connect and then I disconnect, and I connect and disconnect. So, you probably get the bulk why you had [crosstalk].

WENDY FRITZ: Okay, Karen Dubois-Walton to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Malia Sieve to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yes.

WENDY FRITZ: We're in the home stretch here. Just have to turn one more page. Bonnie Burr to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Repeat the last one.

WENDY FRITZ: Bonnie Burr to be a Member of the State Board of Ed.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Great. Thank you so much.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Were they all unanimous?

WENDY FRITZ: They were, yes.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. Bye, Senator. Hello, Representative Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Hi, Wendy. How are you?

WENDY FRITZ: I'm well. Thank you. I got one of your votes. [laughter]

REP. PERILLO (113TH): I know, sorry. And I had to hop out.

WENDY FRITZ: No problem. Everybody is doing that today. It's a busy day.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Busy day.

WENDY FRITZ: So I have for you Malia Sieve of Waterford to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Perillo is a yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Perillo is a yes.

WENDY FRITZ: Bonnie Burr to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Perillo is yes.

WENDY FRITZ: And I'm pretty sure the one that you did vote on was Karen Dubois-Walton.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): That's correct.

WENDY FRITZ: Okay, awesome. We're done.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. Bye now. Hi, Marti.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Hi, Wendy. How are you?

WENDY FRITZ: Okay. I have for you --

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Ready to go. Mm-hmm.

WENDY FRITZ: Yes. I have for you --

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH):

WENDY FRITZ: Karen Dubois-Walton to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Yes. So they're all joint, are they?

WENDY FRITZ: Yes. Senate Joint.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): All Senate Joint. Okay, they're all starting with us then. Okay. So, yeah. Yes on Karen.

WENDY FRITZ: Malia Sieve of Waterford for State Board of Education.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Yes on her also. Yep.

WENDY FRITZ: Erik Clemons from New Haven to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Yes also.

WENDY FRITZ: And one more. Bonnie Burr of Brookfield to be a Member of the State Board of Education.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Yes. Yes on all four.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you so much.

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Okay, we're all done.

WENDY FRITZ: You wanted to arrive sooner. [laughs]

SENATOR LOONEY (11TH): Thanks, Wendy.

WENDY FRITZ: Thank you. Take care.

ELLEN RITCHIE: Bye, Wen.

WENDY FRITZ: Bye.

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vs/pg

February 9, 2021
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE 10:00 A.M.
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

ELLEN RITCHIE: Goodbye. Let me get him out of here.