

Christopher Gilson

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Sent: Saturday, August 10, 2024 7:59 PM
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Subject: Testimony

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To Dalio: I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony related to strategies/programs/policies to address the crisis of “disconnected youth”. As a member of the Board of Education in Waterbury for 13 years, I have seen many successful programs engaging students on the fringes of education.

Investments in the federally funded Gear Up program that supports students from middle school through high school in partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College is a model that has proved successful.

Investments in alternative educational opportunities including internships with the trades, health care facilities , municipal offices and other businesses. These paid internships by the Greater Waterbury Workforce Board expose students to real life experiences, role models, and provide a sense of pride .

Investments in community organizations that work with youth in our neighborhoods builds a sense of community and pride.

Investments in public education that sustain non academic programs, arts, music, drama, sports etc. make a difference .

The truth is these successful programs are totally under funded and the first to shut down. All of these programs rely on grants and fundraising. State and federal funding needs to recognize that these investments do address the needs of “disconnected” youth but policies and budgets especially in urban areas don’t value our youth as a priority.

Waterbury parents struggle economically and the impact is deep, and lasting on our children. ESSER funds did provide funding for so many important initiatives, but thats over. It is about the funding!

I hope this testimony provides some insight into solutions to the disparity and systemic causes that underlie what is dismissively cause “disconnected” youth. It’s really about a “disconnected “ society that doesn’t “SEE” our children of color in our urban cities. That’s the research!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Brown
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Waterbury Board of Education Commissioner

Sent from my iPhone