

Bridgeport Education Alliance for Public Schools



Testimony of: Shamare G. Holmes, Community Organizer for BEAPS
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SB 1021 AAC A Comprehensive Community Schools Pilot Program

My name is Shamare G. Holmes and I am the Community Organizer for the Bridgeport Education Alliance for Public Schools (BEAPS). I am expressing my support for SB 1021 because I am confident that community schools would combat many of the obstacles our youth and families face concerning the lack of resources, access to services, transportation, safety, teacher and community engagement.

To successfully implement such an ambitious task, there is a need to hire a Community Schools Coordinator. The coordinator's primary responsibility would be to maximize and organize the resources needed to serve the immediate community. They will also act as the liaison between students, teachers and families.

In preparation for the community schools pilot, BEAPS has been working diligently to build a solid foundation by assessing the surrounding neighborhoods, engaging residents and establishing alliances by focusing on the following:

- **Canvassing:** People feel empowered when they are asked what it is they desire or when they are given the opportunity to express their concerns on their turf. Many are invigorated by the idea of being invited to table to create solutions and promote change.
- **Creating problem-solving spaces for SPECIFIC needs and audiences (i.e. *safety, gender specific issues, programming, single moms*):** The more tailored the space, the more likely people will show up based on the relevance to their lives and their willingness to support.
- **Learning Opportunities:** From public speaking to civics, there are many opportunities to help inform locals on how to advocate for themselves and best understand the power they possess as taxpayers and influencers.

Passage of SB 1021 would enable us to continue and elevate this work in Bridgeport. This bill would also provide neighboring districts alike an opportunity to pursue the work as well.

On behalf of the BEA and CEA, I would like to thank Senator Moore and Representative Santiago for their continued help and support with this legislation.

If you would like to learn more about community schools and/or get involved, please contact Shamare at sholmes@mybeaunion.org or 203-727-9248.

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