

Testimony of

Theodore Martinez

CREC Educator & Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Director of the CREC Education Association

Before the

Education Committee

Re:

SB 227: AN ACT CONCERNING MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM FUNDING.

March 4, 2022

My name is Theodore Martinez, and I teach 1st grade at the CREC Academy of International Studies Elementary School. I am also here as the chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee with CREC-EA. I testify today in support of Senate Bill 227 and an increase in funding to our magnet schools. As a CREC educator, I am proud of the strengths and successes of our schools, but also know what a funding increase would mean to our students, educators, and school communities.

I'd like to begin today by sharing that I am not only an educator of CREC magnet schools, but also a graduate. I grew up in Windsor in the 90s and attended a predominantly White elementary school. The school systems were great, but as a member of the Latinx community, I was in the minority. I questioned my language and my identity at a young age. CREC presented an opportunity for me to attend a middle and high school that was far more diverse, allowing me to learn with peers who share a similar background. I found my voice because of the high-quality teachers drawn to CREC schools.

Increased funding would mean more of those high-quality educators in classrooms supporting academic and social/emotional recovery following a pandemic.

It would allow for additional school based mental health professionals. CREC schools were able to hire additional school social workers to support the increased demand thanks to federal funding, however that position is limited to only two years. Trauma does not magically resolve after two years. Increased funding would ensure students who need access to a school psychologist or social worker have access to one.

Increased funding would mean allowing teachers to adjust to the nearly 8% inflation we experienced in January. For me personally, increased funding would mean possibly being able to buy my own home or help me better pay my student loans. Student loans I took out to pay for the education required to teach.

Increased funding would enable CREC and other magnet schools to recruit and retain quality teachers, including teachers of color. Veteran teachers are leaving the classroom after a decade or more because teacher salaries have not kept up with the cost of living. The low initial salary points have also deterred many individuals from entering the field of education.

Senate Bill 227 and increasing funding to our magnet schools would have a positive impact on our ability as educators to do all that is asked of us. It would also enable magnet schools to keep teachers in the classroom and to attract new, quality teachers. Please vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you for your time.