

Good Afternoon:

My name is Anna Cano Morales and I am the Director of the Latino Policy Institute at RWU, the Chair of the Central Falls School Board of Trustees, and a board member as well as a parent of The International Charter School.

My message to you today **is a very simple one**. We **all** have a lot of work to do to provide equitable educational opportunities to our students and we must work **together, not in opposition**.

Central Falls Schools can't afford to stand still while large systemic issues get debated. We have placed education equity in the center of everything we do. Most notably, the K-12 partnerships we are building with Rhode Island College, increased graduation rates, instilling a college and career culture, prioritizing parent engagement, and creating a restorative justice model in our schools. We have also have a policy and expectation around Dual Certification for our instructional staff. There are ongoing discussions to bring this policy to the districts of Providence, Woonsocket, and Pawtucket.

Our state has **10,000** Language Learners and over **30,000 Latino students**. We can no longer afford to fund public education with broad brush categories. Not with demographic numbers like these. The formula offers us an uber challenging math problem that needs to score **a proficient or above** by all assessment standards.

Rhode Island is **one of only four states** that do not allocate specific state funding for English learners' education. The question of whether this design adequately meets the needs of English learners should be a natural focus for your review.

Does the "student success factor" poverty proxy account for additional costs of dual language or high quality ESL programming (Native language books and resources, teacher development, community outreach – translated parent materials/ translators). How can the formula move districts/schools/teachers to orient their practices and expectations to meet the needs of ELL students? How can a formula incentivize best practice and evidence based outcomes for students? Given that in RI 75% of ELL's are Latino, How can we be sure it is students' needs and innovation rather than just resources that determine what these programs look like...How can RI use the change in demographics as an opportunity to look at finances for public schools through multiple lenses?

Because some charge that this is an “*us versus them*” argument where resources are the target, we lose sight of the real target—the students. We are all in this together. Many of RI charters currently educating Central Falls children are fulfilling the intent of the law-educating so called "at risk" students. Latinos and ELLs are among them. And they are also fulfilling the intent of impacting the larger sector with all of the dissemination work that is going on. Our district is a living witness and participant in this dissemination work. We look forward to continue this collaborative work with other districts and schools in RI.

I thank you for your time and attention to this important work.

Anna Cano Morales
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