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Charles Pagano
President
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RE: Gender-Neutral Bathrooms and Safe School Environments for LGBTQIA+ Students

President Pagano and Fellow Board Members

My name is Christian Acevedo. I am one of RACCE's Youth Organizers and I am here today speaking to you as a Waterbury Public Schools graduate about an issue that should have been addressed years ago. In 2019, I asked my former principal if there was a possibility of having gender neutral bathrooms in my school. My former principal stated I would have to ask the district because there is just simply not enough money.

Here we are today with copious amounts of money given to the school district by the Biden Administration. What excuse do you have today? We have the funds to do so and I know we have the capacity to do it. The question is does this board and our current district leadership staff have the courage to do it the right way. State law allows students to use whichever bathroom or locker in which they identify with and makes them feel safe. We need to go one step further and align this process with our values and produce a robust and just solution.

A question I want to ask this board is: As a non-binary student which bathroom would I be allowed to use? The answer for students like me and others is, "we don't know," and "it shouldn't be the nurse's office or a staff bathroom." Therefore, I am here to demand that there is at least one bathroom in **EVERY** school that is gender neutral where trans, gender non-conforming, transitioning students and others would be allowed the privilege that their cisgendered counterparts have with feeling comfortable in the bathrooms in which they use. The Waterbury Schools District vision is that "ALL Waterbury Public Schools students will graduate ready to transform their world." So here I am changing the world starting with a city in the state of Connecticut that is yet to realize the damaging effects it has caused to some of its LGBTQIA+ students. We will not accept anything short of what we have asked of you today. Anything less would be a failure. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Christian Acevedo
RACCE
Youth Organizer

