



Posters in a school in Sobantu, in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province, South Africa: 2006. Used with photographer's permission.

***In Collaboration: Office of the President and a Local Branch***  
*(September 17, 2024)*

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*The long-form piece below is the first of a new series with the WILPF US “Office of the President” and a local branch in collaboration. This inaugural entry to begin the 2024-2025 school year is being co-authored by the WILPF US Boston Branch, to help go deeper on a local issue of national consequence, making broader connections nationwide. I invite other branches to contact me about topics they may want to raise in this new series. Through national-branch cooperation, we strengthen our movements.*

*Reader, this in-depth and straight-forward piece demonstrates the value and importance of our national organization with the local branches. If you are not already a WILPF member, please [join us](#). We urge you and everyone to be a “WILPFer And...” -- meaning join an international coalition for peace and freedom for all, engaging with [WILPF’s work](#) to help publicize the fullness of issues, to raise unstated ones, and to reveal the many interconnections to create a better society and future for everyone.*

*In this first of the new series we explore a case study in education inequity, examining a metro-Boston community that is violating the “Right to an Education” mandated in Article 26 of the [UNUDHR](#).*

*Darien Elyse De Lu  
President, WILPF US*

## Fund Schools First: Calling for a Commitment to the Future

We call for a federal mobilization to respond to our nation's future by responding to a generation of students navigating through a pandemic. They are exemplified by [the chants of the students in Brockton, Massachusetts saying, "Fund Schools First!"](#)

To take the action needed to equitably fund public schools, each year we should – and *we have the ability* to add *the three-year total for federal pandemic-relief-funding* to every school in the country, *in addition* to the present federal funds given to states and local municipalities. *We have the ability* to fund public education at this increased level while **saving** well over a trillion dollars annually.

To advocate for fiscal accountability in all local communities for schools, students, and families of every zip code across America, we will be crunching some numbers in this piece.

The three-year pandemic-relief-level-funding total amounts to \$122.8 billion. This is how much more the federal government can give annually to the states and local communities while only amounting to *less than 10% of funds saved!*

In these partisan times, ***we need to come together for our children*** to fund their educations and brighten their futures. American children, their parents and guardians should not have to pay a tuition to get an amazing education.

To the WILPFers of America; to the many teachers in local, state and national [unions](#); to parents, guardians and community members who care about all our children; *we will achieve* amazing public schools for every zip code in America! If not here, then where?

There are many ways we can fund public education; in this piece, we will touch upon a few: By passing two legislative solutions currently in Congress, the Wall Street Speculation Tax and the Ultra-Millionaire Tax, *we will have the ability* to fund schools at *total three-year* pandemic-relief-funding levels and much more! Add to that, Pentagon accountability to spend only what is budgeted by Congress and there is almost two trillion dollars annually that can be better used supporting the 99% of Americans across all political leanings and cultural backgrounds.

Every Congress member who is truly for their constituents and not the donor-class must pledge to support the passage of these two low-hanging-fruit, cross-the-aisle pieces of legislation.

The annual revenue from these steps forward will allow public schools in red, blue, purple, green and all districts to be "Funded-First!" with over \$1.5 trillion to spare! Add to that passage of bills like [Proposition One](#) and the total goes even higher! This is what government working for the people looks like and not government subsidizing the billionaires, bankers and big corporations because:

[All Children's Lives Matter.](#)

[All Children's Educations Matter.](#)

[All Children's Futures Matter.](#)

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Education is the silver bullet! Education is everything! We don't need little changes, we need gigantic, monumental changes. Schools should be palaces. The competition for the best teacher should be fierce, they should be making six-figure salaries. Schools should be incredibly expensive for government and free of charge for its citizens, just like national defense.

These words were written by Alan Sorkin for the character of Sam Seaborn in season one, episode eighteen of *The West Wing* on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000. At the turn of the millennium, a six-figure salary of \$100,000 was equivalent to over \$182,000 today. The cinematic depiction of a time with bi-partisan collaboration, now a distant memory, shows how much our country has changed since this episode aired almost a quarter century ago.

Sam Seaborn's vision of education from the *West Wing* is one that invests in our future by giving every student and their families the best possible preparation to think critically, solve problems and adapt well in a world where many of the future jobs these students may perform do not yet exist.

***Children are the future and we all must come together across parties lines throughout America to ensure equitable public education for each of our nation's children, independent of their zip code.***

There are many ways we can infuse public education with desperately needed federal funds to continue providing pandemic-relief-level-funding to schools. For this to be done accountably the funds need to continue to come with the federal mandate whereby those funds for schools must be spent on schools. This legal mandate on how federal funds are spent by local municipalities must become a nationwide practice for the state funding to schools. In states like Massachusetts, requiring state school funding to be spent on *schools* is *not mandated*. Audits of school budgets must be accompanied with [audits of city budgets](#) over broad time periods of up to 10 years to see spending patterns, especially pre and post pandemic.

The public must not fall into the trap of becoming distracted by formal reports and officials talking of budget deficits in schools when the cities and towns are setting the budget in the first place. If more money is needed in a budget to fulfill the extremely basic expectation in schools of having enough teachers for all student scheduled classes, then that municipality ***must*** prioritize those funds first when setting their budget. This case study from Southeast Massachusetts highlights city officials who grossly underfunded their schools, in the wake of a global pandemic, leaving 1,200 students without teachers for upward of two-thirds of the school day.

That is warehousing students and not educating them. The shame highlighted by the gross fiscal neglect in this community of a generation struggling through historically challenging times ***must*** not happen again anywhere throughout the United States of America, because if we cannot get it right here, then where?

This piece is a call to action for everyday Americans to engage in the duties of citizenship beyond voting: More engagement, more democracy, more formal participation in the budget, spending, and revenue process on all levels of government. We are calling on those who might not have been that engaged to engage, from hardworking, blue-collar moms and dads to single cat-ladies, from those families here in America for generations to those families new to our shores seeking the American dream as inscribed upon the [Statue of Liberty](#):

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

We acknowledge large parts of our population in the United States of America, are a "[Nation of Immigrants](#)." At the same time, we have deep respect for our "First Nations," the indigenous population whose culture and wisdom serves as a guide toward a greater societal balance.

Vilifying immigrants as a political strategy – fear-mongering about Haitians eating pets in Springfield, Ohio – is an unfortunate place we Americans find ourselves in politically. In this case study, the Massachusetts city of Brockton has had a high Haitian population for many years, with 13% of the city population being descendants of Haiti, the fourth highest population of any community in the United States behind New York City, Boston and Miami. Haitian “[Soup Joumou](#),” is delicious! Have no fear, Ohio, and other places where Haitians might be newer to your communities, cats and dogs are very safe throughout Brockton, Massachusetts and have been for many years. America’s history is full of the vilification of newcomers. May we live up to the inscription upon, Lady Liberty. The disappointment to devote line-space in this piece about these matters is “[Self-evident](#).”

*We call for the legislature of the state of Massachusetts to pass legislation to hold local leaders legally accountable to spend state funding for schools on schools, for that fiscal year’s school budget to educate the students in those communities and not for other municipal expenses.*

The total federal pandemic relief funds (ARP-ESSER funds) over three years equaled \$122.8 billion dollars. With these three sensible policies passed, the federal government can annually provide this needed boost to public education in America, investing in our children, who are the future.

First, the “[Wall Street Speculation Act](#)” is a tax on trades at 0.5% for stocks, 0.1% for bonds and 0.005% for derivatives. Passage of this commonsense legislation would raise \$240 billion annually. This legislation is presently in the [House](#) and the [Senate](#).

Next, the “[Ultra-Millionaire Tax](#)” taxes those with a net worth of \$50-\$999 million dollars at 2% annually. For those with over a billion dollars, the tax is 3% annually. This bill is up in the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) and will raise \$275 billion annually.

Added together, just these two pieces of legislation amount to \$515 billion in revenue annually.

By simply [holding the Department of Defense to spending what Congress budgets](#) instead of allowing Defense to spend an average of over *\$1.235 trillion dollars more* in annual spending from 1998-2015, a trend that continues. In fact, the DoD routinely fails audits. [Fiscal accountability for the Department of Defense](#) generates a plethora of savings annually.

In total, when combining the money from the “Wall Street Speculation Tax,” the “Ultra-Millionaire Tax,” and [holding the DoD fiscally accountable to only spend what they are budgeted by Congress](#) – based off the over-spending trend from 1998-2015 – this all amounts to \$1.75 trillion annually in savings.

The federal government could then provide public schools across the nation with \$122.8 billion extra annually, which would amount to only 7% of the *total* savings from these three sensible policies.

*These are policies that make all the sense in the world to the large majority of the American people.*

At this added level of public schools funding by the federal government, there would still be well over \$1.6 trillion available annually to pay down the national debt, address the [climate crisis](#), and fund for other people-centered policies. Examples of such policies are [National Improved Medicare for All](#) –

which itself saves an additional \$200 billion annually, per a Republican Koch brothers-funded study by the Mercatus Center in 2018. In addition, these federal funds can help us transition away from [the war economy, shifting to a peace economy](#) as in our WILPF US [Call for Peace](#), and they can help us spread [world peace now](#).

In fact, this “left-over” amount of funding after these policies are passed can afford quite a bit more such as full-time day-care for all American children 0-5 years old, approximately \$650 billion annually, along with all the child-care costs of 5-15 year olds, approximately \$300 billion annually, for four hours after school throughout the academic calendar along with full-time child care for the summer months. Continuing, the still added “left-over” amount can also fund every college student’s full cost of tuition and fees both undergraduate and graduate for approximately another \$600 billion.

Adding and comparing, permanent boost in federal funds to public education, at \$122.8 billion, plus universal childcare, about \$950 billion, plus higher education universal access to all, \$600 billion, *totals* \$1.67 trillion dollars. Subtract the \$200 billion in annual saving from the passage of [National Improved Medicare for All](#), legislation that lowers health care costs for every America without sacrificing care. Three out of five employees in health care administration would go work for Medicare the other two of five having job retraining, adding \$5 billion, for a new total of \$1.48 trillion.

The \$1.75 trillion in funding still leaves \$270 billion. This \$270 billion number is enough funding to help all those with present college debt be able to stop making payments and have the government relieve this debt in less than six and a half years.

In a short recap, we presently are not taxing the wealth of the ultra-millionaires and billionaires enough, we are not taxing Wall Street enough, and we are not holding the Pentagon fiscally accountable enough.

In combination, these result in only a fraction of 1% of the population actually benefitting from the \$1.75 trillion annually.

Enough is enough! As identified above, when *repurposed*, that \$1.75 billion is able to provide top-tier public education in every zip code in America, provide universal childcare for all from 0-15 years old, and have enough left over to fully fund universal public higher education for all Americans, with immediate loan forgiveness to all college debt.

We can do all of this, while also drastically improving the broken healthcare system in America, to an additional \$200 billion annually toward this our straight-forward plan: “We the People” prioritizing “People Over Profit” and not “[Profit Over People](#).” The *us against them* is not red versus blue, not immigrant versus American-born; the real *us against them* is the billionaires, bankers, and big corporations versus the rest of us. They use an administrative class willing to do the bidding of these [power brokers](#) and whose loyalty to the wealthy is far tighter than the [solidarity](#) of “We the People” as “[One Big Union](#).”

Holding the Pentagon accountable requires a culture shift that takes time. However, even with only the first two pieces of active legislation in Congress -- taxing the mega-rich through the passage of the Wall Street Speculation Tax and the Ultra-Millionaire Tax -- the annual total pandemic-level funding for public schools would amount *only* to less than 24% of the funds generated.

This election year, public education faces the banning of books and media omissions of information

about the disturbing decline of American public schools. Preservation of our democratic republic is dependent upon an educated electorate. Citizens need to be literate in mathematics and science with the ability to understand budgets and see through big-money ad campaigns (with ever-increasing online content manipulation by artificial intelligence). A country more [literate in mathematics](#) will vote differently, to support their own interests and not the interests of Wall Street, the mega-rich and the military industrial-intelligence complex.

Since the 1960s, [civics](#) as a stand-alone class is no longer taught in public schools. “[Ultimate Civics](#)” is [a manual for how our governmental structure operates](#). Our government is only as effective as its people in their ability to collectively wield the levers of political power, exercising their civic duties in the face of a system out of balance due to the influence of the billionaires, bankers, and big corporations.

The [National Education Association](#) notes how, previously, civics was commonly taught in schools with high school students having multiple courses in both civics and government. The [Teacher Federation of America](#) affirms the of importance civics has in helping save America from itself.

For the last several decades, as curriculum no longer mandates the inclusion of civics, civics offerings have been cut. Meanwhile, ignoring the fundamentals of civics, the [Supreme Court just ruled this summer](#) in a 6-3 ruling that the President has broad legal immunity for official acts, as stated in the Supreme Court’s majority opinion:

When may a former President be prosecuted for official acts taken during his Presidency?

In answering that question, unlike the political branches and the public at large, the Court cannot afford to fixate exclusively, or even primarily, on present exigencies. Enduring separation of powers principles guide our decision in this case. The President enjoys no immunity for his unofficial acts, and not everything the President does is official. The President is not above the law. But under our system of separated powers, the President may not be prosecuted for exercising his core constitutional powers, and he is entitled to at least presumptive immunity from prosecution for his official acts. That immunity applies equally to all occupants of the Oval Office,

One of the dissenting justices standing up for *the people*, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, accurately stated that there is “No constitutional text that supports Presidential immunity.”

More attention must be given to what is happening civically along with both the funding for education and how the education money actually gets budgeted and spent by officials in local communities. There must be full transparency with budgets and spending at all levels of government – from the Pentagon on down to our local cities and towns, especially to their school budgets.

States give more funding for schools in lower-income urban areas, where the tax base is not as high as more affluent zip codes that can spend tens of millions extra on their education budgets. These state funds are intended to address education inequity. Yet the funds are too often spent otherwise, with questionable uses that are barely tracked, if not entirely ignored.

Twenty miles south of Boston, we have our case study of how this is happening in [Brockton](#), Massachusetts. Earlier this year, [WILPF's Boston Branch](#) arranged to hear from several community organizers who are also mothers of Brockton students. They shared about what is happening in the Brockton Public School District.

In this metro-Boston city, [funds were poorly prioritized and mismanaged](#). Massachusetts is a state that ranks amongst the top 10 states in the nation for average per pupil spending. The problem with averages shows up when probing a bit deeper: We discover that a small state like Massachusetts has many highly affluent communities, whose officials are adding millions to tens of millions of dollars annually to their school budgets. The contrast of these affluent communities with the average per pupil spending in the state's black and brown lower-income communities is staggering, with Cambridge virtually doubling the per pupil average that Brockton spends.

This is the problem with averages! The average spending per pupil in the state looks a lot higher due to the many communities with high property tax revenues due to so many homes worth a million to several million dollars!

In 2019 the Massachusetts House of Representatives and the state Senate addressed this deep inequity by unanimously passing the [Student Opportunity Act](#) which helps close the funding education equity gap between urban and suburban schools.

**This is why we are calling for the state of Massachusetts to pass legislation holding local leaders legally accountable to spend state funding *for schools on schools*, on that fiscal year's budget, to educate the students in those communities – and *not* for other municipal expenses.**

Despite the many tens of millions of extra dollars the state of Massachusetts gives annually to the city of Brockton, elected officials there still laid off almost two hundred teachers at the end of the 2022-2023 school-year. These lay-offs [triggered the loss of 435 teachers](#) total, after early retirements and staff exits to other school districts, while Brockton did not hire the laid off teachers back. The city officials of Brockton fiscally abandoned the students and children of the city. As horrible as these actions would be, occurring at any time, this all transpired in the wake of a global pandemic, when our youth needed us the most!

In this presidential election year, Brockton's situation has gained international media attention, becoming the plaything of extremist responses and right-wing media. You can guess the angles: violent immigrants, with the blame cast upon BIPOC families. You may have already heard or seen media headlines in the [national](#) and even [international](#) news about calls for the National Guard to enter Brockton High School with the [New York Post](#) calling Brockton High School, "America's Most Violent High School." The media seized upon the negative stories, sensationalizing what was happening while vilifying the minority student population, narratives like those after the murder of George Floyd, when WILPF stood, ["Together with the moms, veterans, and others standing up for civil rights."](#)

The mayor and city council are to blame for the chaos of this past 2023-2024 school year, not the students. In May of 2023, the same month the two hundred layoffs were announced, there was a [stabbing on the campus](#), yet the city officials still went ahead defunding the schools.

The subsequent teacher shortage left many students being "warehoused," sitting in the cafeterias for

sometimes as much as two-thirds of the school day – four out of the six periods – without classes.

The Interim Superintendent of Schools, Dr. James Cobbs, was quoted in the [Boston Globe on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023](#) in a piece titled “Hundreds of Brockton High School students spending class time in cafeteria due to substitute teacher shortage.” The students in the cafeteria were there because of much more than a substitute teacher shortage. Cobbs stated that some amount of the school day is being missed by around 1,200 students daily, which is just about 30% of the school’s students sitting in the cafeteria being warehoused instead of taught. As we have stated, this is a violation of every one of those students’ “Right to an Education” mandated in Article 26 of [the UNUDHR](#).

In a mostly white school district, instead of focusing on student behaviors, the local and regional media would help highlight the absurdity of these students being warehoused, prompting a societal response to hold the city officials accountable. The media would not mislead the public to think that 1,200 students without teachers was because of a substitute teacher shortage, like how the local print and tv media has portrayed the situation. If the students were mostly white, the focus instead would be the conditions the students were thrust into due to the fiscal mismanagement.

The Brockton High School student body is made up of mostly black and brown students, some of whom immigrated from Haiti and the Cape Verde islands off the West Coast of Africa. Independent of socio-economic status or ethnic background, when there are 1,200 teenagers sitting daily, bored with nothing to do, bad things will happen.

The media’s sensational stories fueled national anti-immigrate feelings along with perpetuating a systemic racist narrative. (Please see the [WILPF Resource library to learn more about systemic racism](#) and “[Systemic Racism 101: A Visual History of the Impact of Racism in America](#)” co-authored by both [Living Cities](#) and fellow WILPFer, Berkley College of Music and UMass Boston Professor along with Brockton mother, [Aminah Pilgrim PhD](#)).

These narratives are incomplete and place the blame on the students and their families instead of the conditions that led to this chaos. Even with all of the staff lay-offs and storages due to the fiscal mismanagement, the Brockton High School students persevered, winning academic awards as well as accomplishments in the arts and athletics. Many of the super-star students of Brockton High School go off to highly acclaimed colleges and universities, including many Ivy League and other top schools.

Imagine what would be possible if the elected officials prioritized educational spending in the city of Brockton with a vision of public education like that of Sam Seaborn. Imagine what Brockton students could then achieve.

With the increased federal aid during the pandemic, the 2022-2023 school year finally saw the Brockton Public Schools staffed to a *baseline* of acceptability. Still, there was a need for more guidance counselors, more adjustment counselors, and more teachers to further reduce classroom sizes allowing for more individualized instruction and more student social and emotional support.

[Schools are not like Ford Factories, as referenced by Prince EA](#). When returning to in-person classes for the [2021-2022 school year, the Massachusetts Department of Education, DESE’s plan was to accelerate student learning](#). This was only a “Roadmap” to leaving students and families behind in all the lower income communities like Brockton, one of the most impacted by the pandemic in the state. Teachers need classroom autonomy to address the needs of the students in front of them, meeting the students and each unique class where they are at, to then help them forward being judged on student objective outcome and not micro-managed by administrators doing the job of enforcing the draconian state mandate that left students behind who needed more support on basics before building a top that.



The 2023-2024 fiscal year was the first without the increased federal pandemic funds. This legally allowed the city to savagely make cuts with callous disregard for the students, their families and the staff that had just loyally endured teaching throughout a pandemic.

This is a time of national teacher shortages, where less and less college graduates are entering the field of education. These days, teachers are a rare commodity. When Brockton made the cuts, there were billboards and online ads in other Massachusetts school districts specifically targeting Brockton educators and staff. Teachers are hard to come by now more than ever and Brockton is just giving them away!

Meanwhile, while running for re-election during the fall of 2023, the city [Mayor Robert Sullivan](#) publicly bragged about Brockton being the only municipality in the state that maintained construction projects during the pandemic lockdowns. In recent years, the city has spent well over sixty-million dollars and counting on non-essential building projects, while a generation navigates a once-in-a-century global pandemic being warehoused without teachers.

To avoid the chaos of the past year, all the city had to do was [listen to their students](#) who addressed the school committee on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 a few weeks after the May 2023 cuts were announced. The students led a chant throughout the auditorium saying, [“Fund Schools First!”](#)

[National Communications Coordinator](#) for WILPF US and fellow WILPFer [Michael Louis Ippolito](#) teaches at Brockton High School and was a former student who graduated Brockton High School, class of 2000. He addressed the mayor and school committee after organizing over [two-thirds of the high school staff to sign onto a statement he read](#), representing the voices of over two-hundred teachers, guidance counselors, support staff and administrators. Together they called on the city not to cut teachers and staff and to re-prioritize city spending. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 -- eight months before national and international news headlines unjustly vilifying our predominantly black and brown student population, before stories about the National Guard and other sensationalist stories ones, like those in the New York Post – the following statement (in part) was read:

Do not close a building, do not rearrange the administration & bring back all the staff. Now is not a time for cuts. Now is a time for the city of Brockton to re-prioritize where their funds are directed & fully fund the schools. Support our Superintendent in not having to make cuts. With a city budget of almost a half of a billion dollars, the 18 million dollars needed to fully fund the schools must be re-prioritized & given to the schools. Last school year, 2021-2022, at Brockton High alone we lost well over a dozen teachers who quit outright due to the many new & growing challenges. Call back the staff before we permanently lose those who have stayed with us through these difficult times as they find jobs elsewhere after this round of layoffs. Now is a time to make schools the top priority when setting the city budget, the city must prioritize taking care of our kids now & in the years to come..... If you all go through with these wholesale changes of closing a building, rearranging the administration & reducing the number of positions, you will be risking the detonation of a chaos bomb.

An August 2017 piece by Michael Ippolito titled [Sanders, Controlled Opposition And Building Popular Power](#) published by [Popular Resistance](#) stated:

If government functioned as it was designed to, April 15th each year would be a celebration. People would celebrate the giving of tax dollars to the government so that the will of the people would be carried out improving the lives of all through New Deal legislation & other people-centered policies that once helped create a thriving middle class in America. This is seen especially with teachers who are a targeted group on the front lines of the struggle to

realize a functioning democracy. In the turmoil that is cast by ever-changing national standards, with a lobbied push to privatize education to create another revenue stream, the first step always done to de-legitimize a government service is to de-fund it. When it begins to run inefficiently, because it is underfunded or a shell of what it could be, the fingers get pointed for how a private system is better. Where is the solidarity with the education system & the communities? This is all a part of what a functioning democracy would look like. Instead, we have students that are disengaged from learning.

Brockton High School is the largest school in New England, enrolling just under 4,000 students. [Not long ago, the school was known for its educational excellence.](#)

The pandemic-era allowed for private corporations to gain more of a footing in public education with lower-income districts the first targeted. The pandemic showed how important teachers are yet upon returning to the classrooms, teachers are being forced into using AI-powered software to replace human-led instructional time.

This software takeover of teaching is not being allowed in most all affluent districts and this inequitable reality was candidly shared by the Vice President of one of these private software companies exclaiming how, “Parents in more affluent districts would never allow our software to replace teachers,” yet it is happening in Brockton. These private companies need to be extracted from public education as our students do not need more screen-time in class nor do they need to be looking at a screen for homework.

A step toward this private extraction in Massachusetts is the passage of the [“Thrive Act”](#) this fall at the ballot which will eliminate state receiverships, this is when the state takes over school districts breaking union contracts due to low state standardized test scores. The Thrive Act will also end the era of the high-stakes state testing requirement that is called the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) returning power and autonomy back to the local school districts to best educate their youth in determining mastery of the state standards.

People understand the private take-over of public education via charter schools. People don’t understand how [computer-based learning software is a way for corporations to replace teachers](#) while expanding corporate profits with sinister plans to monetize student data to advertisers as data represents a new form of currency. This trend is already seen with [car manufacturers](#) who are now making more money on selling driver data than on the profit from first selling the new vehicles. This is already a privacy nightmare with newer cars, we cannot allow this nightmare to spread into our schools.

In addition to the privacy issues with the software, the software is also loathed by the overwhelming majority of students and staff alike. The education process becomes more sterile, impersonal and further compartmentalized, not connecting what is being learned to real-world applications.

This past year, the Brockton Public School district even had an entire school of special education students who are on individual education plans (IEPs), not have a formal mathematics teacher. Instead, the district had a special education teacher that publicly stated he didn’t have a background in math and had never taught math before.

The artificial-intelligence-powered software was instead tasked to replace a formal teacher for every one of these students who, all-the-more than general education students, need their teachers to support them staying focused, on-task and following through with their assignments checking-in to ensure conceptual understanding both written out, on paper and with verbal explanations. The software cannot do that, nor can it provide the social and emotional support students need now more than ever!

The problem goes beyond the disappointment of the city of Brockton's poor prioritization of their public schools. These low-income students are not only warehoused in cafeterias and in classrooms, adding to their already excessive screentime, but also the city budget and spending have communicated that these students are disposable.

We at WILPF stand with the citizens of Brockton and their demands for a city audit going back a decade to see pre-pandemic spending trends and for full budget and spending transparency.

The students of Brockton and across our country are the future.

The city officials of Brockton have failed.

*Their deplorably inadequate fiscal prioritization of the schools makes the elected officials responsible for the increased student unrest and poor conditions which led to chaos this past school year.*

Budgets are moral documents, and the elected officials of Brockton showed every other school district in the country what *not* to do through their immoral actions. Every community in the country must hear instead the chants from the students of Brockton saying, "Fund Schools First," equitable public education in every zip code.

In situations like this, it is crucial that other voices be heard, joining other community members in support of the children we want to nurture, not discard. Public education must instill parental and guardian confidence along with respectful relationships between staff and students. Each community's citizens must be civically engaged in the democratic process as we collectively prepare our young learners to be the thoughtful voters and productive citizens of the future.

Again please, if you are not already a WILPF member, join us. We urge you to engage with WILPF's work to help publicize the fullness of issues, raise unstated ones and reveal interconnections to create a better future for us all.