



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bridgeport Schools Secure \$1.2 Million in Services Amid District Budget Challenges

Bridgeport, CT – November 27, 2024 – Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) announced Tuesday in a press conference with Mayor Joseph P. Ganim, U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Congressman Jim Himes, and LifeBridge Community Services that Bassick High School, Central High School, Warren Harding High School students will have increased access to mental health services as a result of \$1.2 million in grants from the Connecticut Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).

“We are thrilled that students will continue to get the support they need, despite the District’s budget challenges,” **said Dr. Royce Avery, acting superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools.** “This collaboration with LifeBridge, the State, and the DOJ, is exactly the kind of partnerships we are proactively seeking to secure additional resources that will help maintain programs that our vital to our students.”

Although the District announced a \$38 million budget gap last week, BPS submitted 87 grant applications for fiscal year 2024, acquiring \$97 million, and has applied to more than 50 grants to date, pursuing \$94 million for fiscal year 2025. These funds are intended to provide vital support to students.

“I would like to thank Senator Blumenthal and Congressman Himes for providing LifeBridge with this grant that will help to support our Bridgeport students. The strategic implementation of this grant will help our school administrators to focus on the challenges that our young people face daily as they receive the resources and care they need within our schools. As mental health and social emotional learning has progressively become a top priority regarding the care of our students, this grant will help in a tremendous way to address the needs of the students in our City,” **Ganim said.**

LifeBridge is a behavioral healthcare organization in the city that serves children, adolescents, and adults through mental health and substance use recovery.

“LifeBridge partners with schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement officials, and the public to prevent acts of violence, treat the effects of exposure to violence, and promote trauma-informed practices,” **said Edith Boyle, President and CEO of LifeBridge.**

Staff members from LifeBridge began working directly with Harding students earlier this month. Its staff members have provided violence intervention and prevention services, which have included Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming and training school staff with a \$200,000 grant from DPH. A second 3-year \$1 million DOJ grant awarded to LifeBridge will provide Community Resiliency Model training for educators and increased access to mental health services in addition to SEL services to students.

“LifeBridge understands that reducing violence in schools begins with mental and emotional support for struggling students. They will ensure that Bridgeport’s public schools are equipped to offer those resources, and that educators are trained in de-escalation and counseling. For nearly 180 years, LifeBridge has looked out for our community’s most vulnerable, and I am thrilled that this federal funding will strengthen their mission and ensure that Bridgeport’s children are set up to succeed,” **said Congressman Himes.**

LifeBridge has already hired a new Director of SEL and members of the organization’s leadership team has been coordinating with BPS school officials to coordinate the launch of programs.

Blumenthal said, “I’m looking to all of you to show us how this program really works to provide a model for the country. There aren’t that many communities that are going to have it. We’re going to be looking to you to show us success so that the federal government, and maybe others, will commit even more support.”

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ABOUT BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Bridgeport Public Schools envisions a culturally responsive, high-performing learning environment where students thrive academically, socially, emotionally and civically.

We model excellence and equity in education for every child at every level by focusing on quality instruction and providing efficient systems and structures in schools to sustain a culture committed to success.

