

Melissa Clarke
Education Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

Good afternoon members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about education in my community and my son Akeem's school.

I moved to Waterbury from New York several years ago. I chose Waterbury without really knowing much about what the educational options were in the community. As I began to learn about the schools available for my son, I quickly realized I would need to enroll him in lotteries for the local magnet and charter schools. I am happy to say that Akeem was granted a seat in Brass City Charter School in Waterbury as a pre-k student - he is now in kindergarten. I have been very happy with my son's school. He is being exposed to so many wonderful things.

I recently learned that charter schools, even though they are public schools, are not funded fully or represented in the state education formula. My child deserves equal funding for his needs and his education. I also learned that this committee fought for children like my Akeem last year because just like me, you believe all students deserve to be funded equitably no matter the type of school they attend. Today I urge you as our elected leaders to please continue to be supportive of public charter school students and help to ensure that they receive the foundation amount of funding as well as additional for their unique needs. Many charter school students, nearly all come from low-income backgrounds and are in need of support for their education.

While I am so happy that my son is getting a great education at Brass City Charter School in Waterbury, I want all children in my community to have the same opportunities. If funding is cut from the charter school line item and charter schools do not receive equitable funding then it will not be possible for these great schools to remain in operation. This year the Governor proposed to cut roughly \$4 million dollars from the charter school budget that this committee meant for us to have. This type of cut cannot be allowed to happen, especially when there are over 7,000 names on the waitlist in CT for charter schools.

I again want to express my sincere hope that you will work to support my son, and other students like him so that they can continue learning and growing in the schools right for them.

Thank you for fighting for us.