

Marianne Silva
Education Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

Good afternoon members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about my children's school.

I'm Marianne Silva. I first moved to Waterbury in 2008 and my daughter was one of the first 114 students to walk through the doors of Brass City Charter School in 2013. Now my husband and I send both our children to BCCS, as we've come to see that Brass City provides an unparalleled education compared with schools not only in our city but, I believe, in surrounding towns as well.

I am here today to speak in support of equitable funding for Brass City Charter School students and for other public charter school students across the state. I know that you have to make tough decisions to balance the state budget. Please take into account how underfunded our state's public charter school students already are and restore the \$4 million cut from their part of the budget.

We chose a Waterbury public charter school because we finally had a choice for education that matched our own values – prior to this, it was parochial or public district, and our district school was not good enough for my daughter. After learning more, I quickly realized the philosophy, mission and culture of Brass City was special. While I truly believe school administrators and teachers across all schools are putting in their best efforts, the qualities that make charters unique, the qualities I see at BCCS every day, produce not only high-performing students, but good people. My daughter received an award once for “gratitude”; what this represents is BCCS's commitment to fostering an environment that places learning in social emotional intelligence on the same level as academics.

I recently learned that a 2015 study at Columbia University found that for every dollar a school spends on social-emotional learning programs, it sees an eleven dollar return on its investment. A 1000% ROI. Because of this, I think that schools doing this kind of work like Brass City Charter School need and deserve equitable funding.

Under the state's public education formula, CT found that the minimum amount of money needed to educate a child is \$11,525, with additional funding needed if a child is learning English or from a low income family. I cannot believe this, but right now, charter schools do not

Marianne Silva
Education Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

receive that minimum amount of funding or any additional funding to support students based on their needs. This is not okay with me and I imagine, if you really think about the students in need, this would not be okay with you, our elected leaders, either.

In my city, students are on waiting lists eagerly anticipating the day they can attend BCCS. My family is grateful to have found our home in BCCS. Charters are public schools, providing curated, an exceptional education to some of our state's most vulnerable students. When you make budget decisions this year, please remember the wonderful children in our schools. But because of how Connecticut funds public education, those 10,000 mostly low-income, predominantly black and brown public charter school students remain underfunded and forgotten. They deserve the same security and protection, as any other student, that would come with fair, equitable funding.

Thank you.