

## **Councilman Brown Harrigan Testimony Appropriations Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, February 13th, 2012**

Good evening, members of the Appropriations Committee, it's a pleasure to be here with you this evening representing Bridgeport. My name is Marcus Brown Harrigan and I proudly serve the city of Bridgeport as City Councilman for the 132nd district. I'm here to respectfully ask this committee to support public charter schools as you make budget decisions. The proposed cuts in the Administration's budget proposal will impact the highest need students in my city. I am here to voice my opposition to the proposed cuts and ask for your support for these children of my city.

I am a Bridgeport resident who has attended school and college, including Central High and Housatonic in Bridgeport. What you see around me in this hearing room today are great people, the pride of my city and home state. The pride people have for their school inspires me. I know the importance of having great schools in my city because I'm the product of them.

I ran for office on the promise of doing better for Bridgeport, a city we know needs great schools. And I have seen firsthand the many challenges that we face, including a rising parent and family demand for great schools.

I hear from many in my community about their experiences with the educational system in Bridgeport and, like me, say that we need great educational options for our city. Too many of our kids are falling behind, not graduating, not prepared for the workforce and tomorrow's jobs, and we can no longer afford to accept the way things are if we have any hope of improving things for the better.

As I serve and represent the city of Bridgeport, I reflect on the importance of investing back into our great city, and we know that one of the most important investments that we can make for our city's future is in education and investing back into our youth. I am here today because I need your help to make that investment in our children a reality. I deeply believe in the power of our city and what it offers and can grow into, but that requires our state investing in what's working for our kids and families.

The governor's budget includes a \$4 million cut to the public charter school budget line. Cutting 4 million dollars from schools that are successfully preparing our Bridgeport children and other children across Connecticut is not only counterproductive, it is unacceptable. So many of the kids that would be affected by this cut are English

language learners or from low-income families and they have a right to equitable funding. I am here to advocate for them today because they are counting on me and also counting on you.

It is my understanding that this committee worked hard on last year's budget to ensure public charter schools were not cut and fought successfully to get back monies promised to these schools. I am grateful for your leadership on this matter.

I call on you today for your continued support for our Bridgeport public charter schools. Bridgeport's children need access to these high quality public charter schools and the cuts currently proposed put those schools in jeopardy.

We respectfully ask you to restore the previously appropriated dollars to the charter line item and continue to fight for resources for communities like my city of Bridgeport.

Thank you for your time and consideration this evening.

Sincerely,

Marcus Brown Harrigan