

Annette Armstrong
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 13, 2020

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Annette Armstrong and I'm a proud grandmother of a 3rd-grade scholar at Achievement First Hartford Elementary School lifelong Hartford resident and community activist.

I have been before this committee before and have been in the fight for fair funding for years because students like my precious granddaughter deserve it. I was heartbroken and quite frankly angry, to learn that the state is going to cut millions of much need dollars from our public charter schools. How can this be? These schools are already not receiving the right amount of state funding to educate our kids even though they serve the children who need these amazing opportunities most. How can we talk about the children being our future, the urgent need to close the achievement and opportunity gap, the idea that black and brown children in this state, when given what they need, can exceed beyond our wildest dreams in school and beyond?

I love all of our Hartford babies, but this is personal for me. My granddaughter, Arianna, has been a high honors student since Kindergarten. She has already surpassed her end of year reading goals for third grade. I've even talked to her teachers about letting her sit in on 4th-grade math lessons because she is so bright and hungry for success. Some folks say "You make plans and God laughs" but my baby girl has mapped out what she wants in her life and it is awe-inspiring. Can someone help me explain to her why she and her classmates not only don't get the same amount of state dollars as their friends at other schools but now even more money is being taken away? How now those after school programs she's been dreaming about, like a Drama Club, won't happen? AF has been a blessing to her, but it sure feels like she and her classmates are being punished for the choice their families made in the best interest of their academic success and needs.

I know that the members of this committee are hardworking folks with families. I am too. And I want what you want, to make sure ALL of our kids have the tools and resources they need to meet their potential. I ask that you keep my Ari in mind (a future doctor, astronaut, or master teacher) and all of her friends when making a decision as to whether or not you want to level the playing field with equal funding or continue to send a message that our charter school babies don't matter as much. Please restore the dollars cut by the administration's budget and help us move toward a future where all kids receive the equitable funding they all deserve.

Thank you for your time and God Bless each of you.