

## **Testimony to the State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee on Elementary and Secondary Budgets**

**February 12, 2020**

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa, Representative Horn, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I write on behalf of my students, present and future, in New Haven Public Schools. I have taught at Hill Regional Career High School for seven years. I am a resident of New Haven, and an active community member. As a science teacher, I find myself either unable to acquire the supplies for lab activities, or more often buying the materials myself. I am 32 years old. My parents sent me to private school my entire life, so I appreciate a good education, and I have reaped the benefits of my skills and abilities. I have noticed the unfortunate reality that I had more access to a good education than my students do today.

Some of our students live in poverty, and their nutrition, mental health, physical health, and lack of opportunities add up over the years. Some students succeed in spite of these obstacles, but they are the exception to the rule.

Charter schools that claim a better education despite these circumstances risk taking attention away from the negative impacts of poverty on education. In addition, they seek funding from existing public schools, while only educating a portion of our students. Their schools are well-resourced with a "network" that pays hundreds of professionals to market their schools to communities of color throughout Connecticut.

Remember, there are no charter schools in Guilford, Fairfield, or Avon. Meanwhile, wealthy towns are subjected to the exact same funding model as urban districts. Specifically, New Haven cannot sustain education funding without property taxes from Yale University. In closing, I ask you to consider the following steps:

- Permit Alliance funds to be used for a broader subset of educational programs, since Alliance isn't really "extra" when ECS is fundamentally inadequate.

- Fund charter school special education programs directly, thus removing this under-funded mandate imposed on school districts.
- Revert to a higher threshold for excess cost reimbursement. Lowering the threshold has decreased reimbursement, while already-high costs continue to rise.
- Eliminate free busing for private and charter schools.
- Provide expanded funding for extended school hours programming, early childhood, vocational and technical programs, mental/behavioral health, nursing, Family Resource Centers, and training in anti-racism/anti-bias + non-punishment-based disciplinary practices.

We know that funds are made available for the things that we collectively value. These changes would help bring us closer to meeting the urgent needs of children, families, and educators in our classrooms, and creating the future that we all want for our state.

Please contact me with any comments or questions, I love to discuss education policy.

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Sincerely,

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