

## Lygia Davenport's Testimony to Support Music Haven

At this time last year, I remember dismissing my students and packing my things into my car after a day long of teaching at a New Haven Public School. I drove the 45+ minute commute and then waited several hours to testify before you about the importance of Music Haven. At that time, I came before you as a parent of three young musicians and as a board member. My testimony today is given from a different perspective, but has a more in depth message. Because of the pandemic and having a medically fragile child at home, I had to pivot professionally. As I made that shift, I came on board as a part-time staff member at Music Haven. Currently, I am the Development Associate. In this role, I have had the benefit of reading all of the wonderful messages that come from our donors, many of which state they wish they could do more at this time. Our giving has decreased and our number of new donors has also declined. What we have had however, is consistent acknowledgment of being successful in our continuation and implementation of programming for our students. Our attendance rate has been consistently high, and the additional support that Music Haven provides has proven to be necessary, especially for our refugee families and our families that have dealt with loss. Families have lost income, homes, and even immediate relatives and all while grappling with these challenges amidst the pandemic- Music Haven Has been the place that they felt most comfortable sharing their struggles. I believe this is due to the long-standing commitment and relationships built within the program. As I have stated in the past, Music Haven is not just free lessons, it is so much more than that. It is consistency, reliability, and a symbol of hope. During this time we have been able to keep our students engaged as well as our alumni. We have a 100% acceptance rate to (four year) college. This speaks volumes considering the rate at which the city struggles not only with high school retention and graduation but also college acceptance. Music Haven's new College and Career Pathways Program has enabled our alumni to stay connected, serve as role models, mentors and teaching fellows for younger students this year. Not to mention, those long standing relationships provide a sense of security for them as well, they know they are still part of the Music Haven family. Funding is crucial to continue programming that has a lifelong impact on these young lives. Music Haven produces leaders, engaged community members, talented artists and contributors to the state of Connecticut. I write this on behalf of the families that have lost members that would have written to you if they were here today. I write this on behalf of the staff that works tirelessly behind the scenes to provide engaging programming and remain that constant in our young peoples' lives. I write this as a taxpayer that is proud of a program located in the heart of the community it serves, bringing two worlds together to create opportunities. We have done our part to keep the music going during these challenging times. I ask that you provide funding to continue to keep the music going and invite you to one of our virtual programs, until we are able to host you in-person when it is safe to do so. Thank you!