

Appropriations Committee Hearing

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Stefanie Donahue

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My name is Stefanie Donahue and I am the mother of five, and an educator who resides in Manchester, CT. While the world is struggling with the ongoing crisis posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, I want to take a moment and share some positivity about my children and their education. This week is National Charter Schools Week and as a parent of Odyssey Community School, I wanted to talk about the wonderful education my child is receiving here in Manchester. Even during this time of social distancing and remote learning, my child still has access to his teachers and is still being pushed to be the best student he can be.

Fourteen years ago, in a search for a school that would fit the needs of our daughter with Asbergers, my husband was blessed to find Odyssey Community School. Since then all five of our children have been the benefactors of solid instruction, programs that are research-based and loving, and talented teachers that have the proper training to implement them. In addition, they have a social-emotional culture that is second to none.

I am writing today as someone who understands how crucial equitable funding is for all of our Connecticut students. The same year our daughter was entering Kindergarten at Odyssey, I started my teaching career in CT public schools. This has given me a front-seat view of what it means to see (and feel) the difference between a school that is equipped with all the resources it needs and one that is forced to do more with less.

And Odyssey is definitely one of the schools doing more with less. Last year, two valedictorians and one salutatorian of Manchester High Schools were Odyssey Alums. And I am proud to say that our little girl who started her journey with Odyssey 14 years ago is currently a senior, graduating with both her high school diploma and an associate's degree.

As someone I know cares about all of our students, I strongly urge you to ensure that all of our beautiful Connecticut public school students are fully funded based on their needs. Let's make sure that families, like mine, can choose a school that is the best fit for the child without fear that there will be a lack of resources or funding. Manchester families are counting on you and thank you for your support.

Best,

Stefanie Donahue

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