

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
Tuesday, March 9th, 2021  
Ruben Felipe, Connecticut Charter Schools Association**

Good day Chairperson Walker, Chairperson Osten, and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you today. My name is Ruben Felipe, I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Charter Schools Association, and we represent the 11,000 mostly low-income, minority kids attending Connecticut's 21 public charter schools in 10 cities and towns, as well as the 6,000 names currently on waitlists for public charter schools across the state.

As you are aware, in Connecticut, we implement a separate and extremely unequal public education funding system, one that continues to leave our 11,000 mostly low-income, Black and brown kids severely underfunded.

The Governor recognized that to send a message to charter school students that they are worth less is fundamentally unfair and shortchanging them, and so his budget proposes to raise the charter per-pupil funding amount from \$11,250 to \$11,525, which matches the foundation amount of the Education Cost Sharing Formula. This step acknowledges the long-standing funding inequities these students have faced for generations.

This is an important first step forward towards funding equity for the state's public charter schools, and we are grateful to the Governor for proposing this increase and urge the legislature to move this proposal forward.

But while an important first step, **we urge you to apply the ECS formula to all public school students, including public charter school students. Taking this step would enact a single, unified funding formula and equitably invest in all our public school students.** Because we must center public school funding to be student focused so that all kids are included and equitably funded regardless of where they live, how much their family makes, or what public school they attend.

Additionally, we continue to urge the legislature to fund the opening of Danbury Prospect Charter School and to fund the growth of Stamford Charter School for Excellence into its middle school grades. There are many families seeking these options and these proven providers can deliver a great education in cities that need them.

For additional context, charter school students - who are 64% low-income and 80% Black and brown - represent the very students that the weights of the ECS were intended to serve - students who are low-income, in concentrated poverty and have additional learning needs like English Learners. But because the ECS formula currently only applies to traditional public schools, they don't have access to this funding.

Again, we ask you to **apply the ECS formula to public charter school students and all public school students.** Because we must do everything we can to get our children

the education and future they deserve. We have a moral and constitutional obligation to provide our most in need children with the quality educational opportunities many of us are privileged enough to take for granted.

Thank you for your time today, and for your consideration.