

INTEGRATED DAY CHARTER SCHOOL

68 Thermos Avenue

Norwich, CT 06360



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Senator Osten, Representative Porter, and members of the Appropriation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with your committee. I would also like to thank the CT Charter School Association for their support and guidance.

My name is Ellen Retelle, I am the Director of the Integrated Day Charter School in Norwich, which was one of the first charter schools in Connecticut. In 1997 teachers, parents, and community members founded the Integrated Day Charter School This group purchased an old Thermos factory, cleaned it up, purchased furniture, had a lottery and 6 weeks later, opened the school for students in Prek-6. Two years later, the school included 7th and 8th graders. Our core tenets and unique activities that are just as strong now as they were then. To name a few...every student research three topics a year and presents to their classmates and parents, service learning, social justice, learning buddies, all school, bread feast, and student empowerment. We are a diverse school in many ways: racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, family type, languages, and home of origin. IDCS has more than 500 students on the waiting list.

As one of the original CT charter schools, we have come a long way, but not far enough. The current funding for charter schools is not only inadequate, but also unjust and inequitable for the children. The funding gap between traditional public school (TPS) and CT charter schools is sizable. Currently, Connecticut charter schools receive **\$11,250** per pupil from Connecticut State Government. With 352 students, IDCS receives \$3,960,000 in CT state funding, plus approximately \$120,000 for federal Title grants and about \$270000 for special education. Our total budget equals **\$4,350,000**, which is **\$12,358** per pupil. Our parents sponsor fundraisers every year to support our school. This ranges from \$15,000 to \$20,000 every year.

Traditional CT public schools per student expenditure is between \$15,000 to \$23,000. How does this compare to charter schools? What's the difference? Remember, charter school funding is \$11,250. For \$15,000 per pupil the difference between charter schools and traditional public schools is \$2642. If you multiply \$2642 by 352 IDCS students, this is \$929,984 in additional funding. For \$23,000 per pupil, the difference between charter schools and traditional public schools is to \$10,642, which amounts to \$3,745,984. This is a substantial amount of money. Let me be more precise, our local public school district spends about \$16,000 per pupil. The difference between the \$11,250 and \$16,000 is \$3642 per student. When you multiply \$3642 by 352 IDCS students, this would be additional \$1,282,984 for IDCS.

Governor Lamont's budget increases charter school funding from \$11,250 to \$11,525. This is the minimum amount of money local districts are required to spend on their children and youths' education. Needless to say, I am testifying in support of increasing the charter school funding from \$11,250 to \$11,525. The increase would equal \$275 per pupil. For IDCS, this means \$275 times 352 students; this is an additional **\$96,800**. This will make a considerable difference. We will be able to afford a raise for our teachers whose salaries are in the bottom 3rd of our region. And, hopefully, we will be able to afford a raise for our noncertified staff, too.

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This should be the first step to increase funding for charter schools, because it will increase the funding to the minimum amount. In addition to offering competitive salaries to the staff, IDCS needs to be able to purchase curriculum materials and resources for all students, replace furniture, upgrade the media center, set aside funds for teacher computers, HVAC systems, roofing, fixing the leaky gym wall, replace the thermos factory loading dock at the back of the building and the list goes on. Frankly more money does and would make a difference.

I do not support decreasing funding to traditional public schools and increasing charter school funding. What I support is charter school student being treated fairly and equitable, our students are public school students.