

1408

Michael M. Sharpe, Chief Executive Office, Jumoke Academy-
Testimony before the Education Committee, March 12, 2007

My name is Michael M. Sharpe, I am the Chief Executive Officer for Jumoke Academy Charter School, located at 250 Blue Hills Avenue- Hartford, CT. I also serve as the Co-Chairperson for the Connecticut Charter School Network. Today I would like to speak in support of Senate Bill 1408, An Act Concerning Charter Schools.

One of the major problems confronting Connecticut is the achievement gap between white, black and Hispanic students. Connecticut students of color trail behind white students by as much as 52 % in reading and 48 percent in Math.

In 1997 a wonderful opportunity for school choice was introduced to the parents and students of Connecticut; the General Assembly approved the opening of 14 new charter schools.

Jumoke Academy, one of those charter schools that opened in 1997, is an elementary and middle school comprised of 325 African American, African-West Indian and Hispanic students. Since that time, over ten years ago, charter schools across Connecticut have achieved great success against steep odds.

For example, in 2001 Jumoke Academy, a one hundred percent minority school, only a dismal 28 percent of its students scored proficient, goal or above. We refused as a school to except low performance and we partnered with the students, parents, staff and community to build a system of accountability for academic excellence.

Last year on the 2006 Connecticut Mastery Test over 95 percent of our fourth graders in math scored proficient, goal or above on the Connecticut Mastery Test; thus not only closing the achievement gap but equaling the performance of top performing districts throughout Connecticut.

The average school district in the State of Connecticut spends approximately \$11,500 per pupil to educate their students. Jumoke Academy receives \$8000 per child, 30 to 40 percent less than Connecticut's average per pupil spending.

But I'm not here to cry! I come with my head held high asking to form a partnership with the State of Connecticut. We are accountable to our students, parents and staff to ensure that they have the resources, professional development and support to meet our standards of high expectations. In return we demand high performance from our students, staff and family.

And so should it be between the state and Connecticut charter schools. How wonderful to have a set of accountability standards in place that allows charter schools like Jumoke Academy to continue to close the achievement gap—through equity in funding—and the full support of the general assembly.

Jumoke Academy continues to achieve on borrowed time and money. Our kids are hungry for learning...they will not be content until the words achievement gap suffers the same fate as zoot suits and dinosaurs. Thank you for considering our request for equity in funding

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

Michael Sharpe

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