

Senate Bill 1408: An Act Concerning Charter Schools
Pamela Smith, Amistad Academy parent, 3/12/07

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to come before you and speak on behalf of Amistad Academy and charter schools across the state. My name is Pamela Smith and I have 2 children that attend Amistad Academy in New Haven. When I first considered testifying before you today, I'll admit I was intimidated. I am well aware that there are numerous complex issues surrounding issues of public education, charter schools and funding. I'm not an expert on the statistics of how much money is allotted to public vs. charter schools and why. I'm not an expert on the statistics of reading and writing scores for public vs. charter school students. Nor am I an expert on the legislative processes required to make the changes we are asking for. But I am an expert in the one area that matters most when it comes to talking about issues of education: my children. It is very easy to forget those tender young souls that are at the core of this debate.

My son is a 6th-grader at Amistad Academy. His struggle in elementary school, despite the resources available to him, led my husband and me to seek out a different school environment for him in 5th grade. We discerned that what our son needed was an environment of high academic expectations. We chose Amistad Academy, and we thank God that we were able to find such an environment there. We were optimistic that we would see some improvement but neither of us could have foreseen the dramatic changes that occurred in that child in just a matter of months. We saw a child that went from being anxious and weepy each morning before school to one who exhibited overt excitement, confidence, and enthusiasm about going to school. We saw a child that went from barely achieving passing grades to one who was consistently on the honor roll and scoring off the charts on standardized testing. We saw a child who went from being unsure about himself and his own ability to succeed at anything to a child who now knows that he can excel not only at his education but at anything he puts his hands too, both now and in the future.

I know this is testimony concerning just one child. But we need to remember that each child is just one child and they are all important. Each child who is positively changed and affected by the education he receives today is one less child that you will hear something negative about tomorrow. I now have 2 kids who are excited about school and who knows, someday they may be sitting where you are, making decisions that affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of children across the entire state of Connecticut. And you can rest assured that they will be well equipped to do so thanks to the superb education they are receiving at a public charter school.

I am here in support of Senate Bill 1408, An Act Concerning Charter Schools, because I am hopeful that, in return for meeting high standards of academic accountability, Amistad and other great charter schools will be given the funding they critically need to be able to continue to offer important educational opportunities to children.

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:
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