

**Mr. Tim Dutton**  
**Director of The Bridge Academy**  
**401 Kossuth St**  
**Bridgeport, CT 06608**

**Members of the Education Committee,**

For the past ten years I have been a teacher, and director at The Bridge Academy in Bridgeport, Connecticut. This year our school has already received acceptances for 4 of our 24 graduates at The University of Connecticut. All of our students will leave with a college acceptance. This is a far higher percentage than any other high school in Bridgeport. I am very proud to be part of such a high-performing school.

The Bridge Academy performs so well because every employee understands the importance of our mission. Together we work to prepare our students for college. Because we are such a small community we cannot make excuses. The answers for our students must come from within our school. We must find ways for all our children to succeed. Along with the charter to operate our school we understand we also take a promise to succeed. We do not have the time or the luxury to play "the blame game" so often heard from educational leaders. I am proud to say that at The Bridge Academy we simply accept our responsibilities and try and find answers.

Because of the success of my school, I urge you to continue your support for charter schools. We have only been able to make do through the unbelievable hard work of our teachers and staff.

Supporting charter schools helps the state attack some of our biggest problems in education. As you know:

- Connecticut is facing a crisis of educational inequality.
- Our state has one of the largest achievement gaps in America: on average Connecticut's low-income students are three years behind more affluent students in reading, writing and math.
- While this crisis impacts Connecticut's poor and minority communities the most, every one of us pays a substantial price. Educational inequality means fewer jobs, more crime, and higher taxes.

**Public Charter Schools are Closing the Gap**

Public charter schools are leading the way in closing this gap by:

1. Increasing the performance of the students who attend charter schools,
2. Pioneering innovative approaches to raising achievement that can be applied by schools across the state, and
3. Changing the conversation about the gains that are possible within our public schools.

The success of Connecticut's charter schools is grounded in a **simple but powerful idea**: greater autonomy for principals and teachers to develop innovative approaches to raising student performance in exchange for greater accountability for results. **The past decade has proven that this approach works for kids.**

Please support us in the following ways:

- ◆ Consider allowing new organizations to grant and oversee charters. New organizations would allow for greater innovation in the charter movement and take some of the tremendous burden off the State Department of Education.
- ◆ Find a way to increase our per-pupil funding from diverse sources. The state legislature faces a great burden having to review our funding every year.
- ◆ Limit legislation that restricts our creativity. Charters were designed to innovate in a myriad of ways. Increased regulation stifles innovation.

In closing, I want to stress that better funding at The Bridge Academy would provide our students with services they desperately need. Specifically, we could provide an even stronger academic program with better student support services and more varied course offerings. In addition, we could provide a vibrant after school program to provide our children athletic and academic after-school activities.

Please consider supporting us.

Sincerely

Timothy J. Dutton  
Director, The Bridge Academy