

Good afternoon.

I am Sharyn Esdaile, a resident of New Haven. I am Principal of Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School which serves the children from Hamden, New Haven, Wallingford and Woodbridge. We are an ACES school.

I have dedicated my adult life to the education of Connecticut's children. All of this may have likely begun when I played school with clothespin dolls underneath the large oak tree in my Alabama yard. The years there were spent with activism and harsh realities. The Civil Rights conscious became a movement. It was an exciting time and a challenging time. Even as children we knew we were on the verge of something new and important: I met Martin Luther King, Jr. on my front porch. I listened as adults planned—in hushed tones and shouted voices— for change. Even at that time and under the poorest of conditions, our schools were the recognized keys to freedom and the realization that our communities sought improvements and the opportunity to fulfill the potential of every child. In my small town, every child sought education though in a separate and unequal situation. We moved to Connecticut as part of the second Great Migration, in search of opportunity.

Just like now. The parallels and similarities are frightening. Inside of more than half a century our change indices are alarmingly stagnant.

The reason I stand before you today is to affirm that education remains an essential key to life improvement. It is at the very infrastructure of our American society. While there has been a modicum of change, significant progress has been noted within our choice schools and interdistrict magnets.

I know firsthand that cross-cultural and interdisciplinary learning make a difference in the perspective that children develop. We need to understand that our communities are segmented indeed by the borders that separate them, **not by human need and aspiration...** We need hope, and we need re-formed communities. After eleven successful years, our school is faced with a possible closing due to funding.

We ask that education and our magnet schools be kept at the fore of the Committee's thinking.—for the sake of our future. The work of 50 years in Brown versus the Board and 30 years in Connecticut's history must advance and continue. Any backward movement will take two to three times as long and two to three times as much compensation to restore.

With the investments made thus far, we must move forward to fulfill the commitment. I urge you to approve full and equal funding of magnet schools.