

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
Wed., Feb.11, 2009

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Thank you for your time today.

I am a proud Connecticut resident and a New Haven parent of two beautiful boys. My sons are inquisitive, love books, bugs, and science. I hope that one day they will grow up and have the opportunity to be doctors, inventors, engineers, or poet laureates. Here is my concern—we need to keep funding for charter schools.

I have been researching schools for my boys for some time, because I know that these years are a critical foundation for their future. I recently went to visit Amistad Academy and Elm City in New Haven, and here is what I saw—I saw kindergartners who were able to read to their parents by the time they went home for Christmas. I saw children taking ownership in their own education—at age 5. I saw parents who were committed to partnering with the schools in educating their kids. I saw a community of individuals who were teaching Connecticut's future the value and meaning of respect for one's neighbor being part of a community.

But it wasn't all holding hands and singing kumbaya—we're talking about hard work from the students. We're talking dedicated parents and devoted teachers, many of whom work 10-12 hours a day if that's what it takes to get the job done. And the results speak for themselves. I want my sons to go to the school where 97% of the kids are at or above grade level in reading, all rising to the challenge of academic excellence together. Not 49% or 65%, that's not good enough.

I want for them to be able to attend 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade etc. there because the further you go, the better it gets in the charter schools. They start aiming for college and being constructive citizens from day one, but it is becoming a reality for the high school students.

Connecticut boasts some of the wealthiest citizens in the nation. We also have some of the poorest—and yes there is a correlation between income and achievement. We need to encourage the work that the charter schools are doing to close this gap with dollars and funding. If we do so, in 5, 10, and 15 years from now we can boast about all the doctors, engineers, inventors, poet laureates, and even state administrators who come from New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford. I sincerely hope to see my boys as charter school graduates among the ranks.