

THOUGHTS FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 11, 2009

Ladies and Gentleman of this Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jay Hannah, and I am a lifelong Hartford resident, and the proud parent of a 5 year old Achievement First scholar named Nya Hannah. Since my time is limited to stand before you today- let me attempt to impress upon your minds this thought- which I will sum up as Our Pursuit of Excellence.

The Excellence we seek at of ALL of our children- whether you live in a urban or suburban setting – can only be obtained if WE care more than others think is wise, if WE risk more than others think is possible, if WE dream more than others think is practical, and if WE expect more than others think is possible.

I stand here today along with these other parents because we do care – perhaps more than others think is wise- and we are asking you- yes- in this difficult economic climate- to once again risk more than you may think is fiscally possible. However, I think the word risk is not the right term- I would say INVEST- because the investment of the FULL- I REPEAT FULL funding – based on the Governor’s word- to fill Charter school seats is a wise investment. WHY? Because your investing in the minds of those who will one day become the backbone of this state and country. Your investing in my daughter Nya.

You see- Nya’s name- in Swahili- means ‘PURPOSE’ – and each of the so far 3 months – that Nya has earned an award for Awesome Attendance or complete HOMEWORK or earned the highest REACH citizenship award- I Know that this undergirds her sense of purpose and her sense of YES I CAN. Everytime Nya and her classmates get to move their behaviour clip up another positive notch- and come home and talk about how well they did- It underlines their purpose and sense of YES I DID. Nya does not come home singing songs found on BET or some crazy music Video – she sings songs learned in a Achievement First rally or music class- and that says to me – and to ALL of these parents today - that in this chaotic world where the old values of respect, citizenship and hard work are being thrown to the wayside, there is a place where our children can go- and practice them- and grow to become better people.

Here’s the bottomline and the choice put before this committee today. FULL investment – I repeat - FULL investment in the growth of Achievement First and all of our CT charter schools- is the investment of our dreams and expectations of our future generation. LET ME ASK YOU THIS: If YOUR child was in Amistad Academy in New Haven, or in Achievement First Hartford Academy- what would YOU expect or dream for them? Would you dare to dream more than the practical? Would you expect more for your child than others think is possible? Or would you just settle for mediocrity – and a below standard, stagnated, run of the mill education for them? O...I think you WOULD dare to dream- and expect more.

Well..... The parents here today- are asking you to you invest fully in these schools- because these schools are giving our children the tools to fulfill dreams and expectations.

My name is Jay Hannah – and my family and I ask you to do the right thing- and invest in Nya and her fellow scholars as they travel the road to college and the pursue Excellence.