

**South Norwalk Collegiate Academy
Community Planning Team**

**Testimony before the Joint Appropriations Committee
Tuesday, February 16, 2010**

***Reverend Lindsay Curtis*
Chair, Community Planning Team**

I represent the Community Planning Team of the South Norwalk Collegiate Academy. For the past two years, our Team of 13 educators and community members has pursued the vision of a new community charter school for low income children in South Norwalk, many of whom are African-American and Hispanic. The “achievement gap” between these children and others in the Norwalk Public Schools is unacceptable and has compelled us to create an innovative school with high academic expectations for all of its students. We are confident that our school, which will serve students from kindergarten to eighth grade, will attract large numbers of families who deserve a choice of public schools in Norwalk and will attract creative educators who want to be part of an exciting new school. It will enable children from South Norwalk to achieve at academic levels that will enable them to complete a college education and will demonstrate new effective practices for adoption by other public schools in Norwalk.

The present situation concerning the opening of new charter schools in Connecticut has stymied us from realizing our vision. We are nearing the completion of the application for a charter for our school, but the State Board of Education is not receiving applications for new charters, because no funds are currently available for new charter schools. We have been denied the chance to demonstrate how effective and innovative our school could be and how great the support for it is in our community.

The devastating “achievement gap” in Connecticut public schools has been well documented. It deprives too many low income and minority children of the equal and effective education which is their right and will have a very negative effect on future economic growth in the state. It is, therefore, short-sighted to cut off a potential solution to this problem—more high performing public charter schools.

We recognize that the crisis in the State’s fiscal affairs makes it very difficult to fund new educational initiatives. That is why a policy of “the money follows the child” for charter schools is the most sensible. This policy is the most equitable and cost-effective method for enabling schools like the South Norwalk Collegiate Academy to fulfill our mission. The children who enroll in our public school should be entitled to the financial support they would have otherwise received in the Norwalk Public Schools.

We are a group of community volunteers who have given hundreds of hours to creating the South Norwalk Collegiate Academy. We ask that the Legislature match our commitment to the children of South Norwalk by enacting a fair and equitable policy of funding charter schools, including new charter schools.

Thank you.