

Sharpe

JUMOKE ACADEMY

MICHAEL M. SHARPE, CEO

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Education Committee Hearing

My name is Michael M. Sharpe; I am Chief Executive Officer for Jumoke Academy Charter Schools and President of the Connecticut Charter School Networks. My sincerest thanks to the chairs and members of this committee for taking leadership in hearing testimony on these very important educational matters. My testimony is in support of raised bills

1. No. 5493 which would eliminate the use of the annual state appropriation process to fund charter schools, and adopt a "money follows the child" funding mechanism
2. H.B. 5421 which would establish an alternative certification route for Connecticut's principal
3. H.B. #5491 "An Act Concerning Certain School District Reforms to Reduce the Achievement Gap in CT.

This is the tenth consecutive year that I have come before subcommittees of the general assembly pleading for support to redress the cumbersome, antiquated and inequitable manner in which charters, vocational and certain non-traditional public schools are funded.

I am keenly aware of the terrible deficit faced by the state and the almost impossible mission of legislators to fund many worthy programs with those limited dollars. But I would be remiss if I did not bring to your attention that without a funding increase, for charter schools this September becomes the third consecutive fiscal year that Connecticut charter schools will not see a cost of living increase. For the third year I must explain to my teachers, staff, parents and students why they must go without basic cost of living increases and basic school supplies.

However, I am encouraged because this committee is considering 3 ground-breaking bills that if passed could leap frog CT into the forefront of education leadership, along with other top performing states that are leading the nation in closing the achievement gap and making excellence as the education standard for our children. I encourage the adoption of these bills not because they would be good for charter schools...but because they would be good for parents-children and CT education.

The education gap in CT and the bills before us today are not charter school issues but public school issues of equity, excellence and choice.

I am so tired of reading reports and studies that try to demonstrate that charters really aren't doing as well; or they are doing well only because of this or that. We need to stop....while Connecticut's educational system is bleeding from a lack of resources and dollars...a few want to issue reports explaining.... why something that is successful is really not successful..

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Let's stop looking at our public education choice programs as separate from Connecticut public education schools.

The truth be told....charter schools are not the answer to

- CT's glaring achievement gap...
- Charter schools are not the secret-weapon answer to school efficiencies.
- Charter Schools are just one solution of the educational network in CT.

When my 8th graders graduate this year, as one of the highest performing classes in the history of Jumoke Academy, they will be leaving to attend

- state vocational schools,
- regional magnets schools, Sheff school
- Project Choice, Glastonbury Vocational High School,
- Ethel Walker, Westminster and Bloomfield Vocational School
- Prince Tech. Vocation School.

Parents want- CT wants all of those schools operating at their best...they want charter, vocational and traditional public schools funded with equity. These bills are about generating a climate of equity and excellence for CT public schools....they are about build schools and programs that work for the children and parents of the community:

1. HB # 5493 makes good business/educational sense. Money following the child is a logical and necessary step to ensure that parents have equitable and fair educational choice for their children.
2. H.B. #5491 "An Act Concerning Certain School District Reforms to Reduce the Achievement Gap in CT expands the tools that allow schools and communities to develop excellence in the least restrictive but quality fashion.
3. H.B. 5421 would establish an alternative certification route for Connecticut's principal corps. Success should be replicated and made accessible so that all schools have opportunity for excellence. Like Teach for America this bill creates a pathway developing and employing great principals.