

Testimony of Kirsten Cox
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358 Springside Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515
Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee
March 24th, 2011

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

Hi, my name is Kirsty Cox and I am currently in my third year at Common Ground High School. I am very concerned about school funding because my school receives only \$9300 per student compared to the more than \$14,000 a year other New Haven public schools receive. Also, as a charter school, tax money that comes from parents who are residents of other cities does not go to my school, but to the schools of the city those students live in. Finally, I do not think it is fair to treat Common Ground students as if they are not equally deserving of their education, as if they are not "real" students because they attend a charter.

Common Ground is one of the most amazing, if not the best school that I have ever attended, and it is the only Charter school I have ever been to. I have attended many other public schools and realize how lucky I am to be going to Common Ground because. I not only get to meet students from other cities and communities but I also get a privileged educational experience. By this I mean I get to learn about the environment and how much of an impact it has on me, my life and everyone around me while attending a school in the middle of West Rock State Park. I am being taught by very intelligent and well respected teachers, whom like my peers, come from all over Connecticut, which I personally feel is one way they show their dedication to teaching. Another strength of my charter school is the way that the school stresses "Big Ideas" education, and helps students to elaborate on one major concept and connect it to the next swiftly so that students have a good understanding of each and how they impact people and the world at large.

Common Ground works with the amount of resources that it has, which compared to most public schools, isn't very much. My school does not have the space that most schools take for granted, and while some would say this makes my school more comfortable because of its size, with the number of students and teachers that Common Ground has, more space is needed. With the amount of money we would receive with equitable funding, we could have an auditorium, a gym or any extra space and resources that could allow for bigger classes, more classes and more extra-curricular activities. Right now, my school has been working on a site plan in order to develop a bigger and more student and teacher friendly space, and if we were to be fully funded, we could get our site improvements underway.

My experience at Common Ground, specifically, has been wonderful. My teachers are successful at creating a comfortable, learning-focused environment and getting students involved in class and projects. My teachers work within the space they are provided and they do a great job in doing so, but I feel that is unfair to teachers and students alike because they are limited to the amount of students they can fit in a class, so many students do not get to take certain courses until the next trimester. I have had

many classes in my school and each has been excellent. So, I really appreciate the classes I have taken because a lot of my peers will not be as lucky as I am.

I am concerned that the money we are not getting goes to other districts because a lot of Common Ground students are not coming from New Haven. This means that Common Ground students are not being treated like other students because the tax money that comes from our parents does not go into our education. I support Student-Based funding to fund charter schools fairly and sustainably and so that all students have the choice of getting a better education like the one I have received at Common Ground.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely