

Testimony of Larry Dome
Teacher at Common Ground High School,
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Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee
March 24th 2011

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

I have been associated with Common Ground High School for 4 years, one year as a volunteer teacher aide and almost three years as a full time math teacher. Each year we struggle as a school to get funding for all aspects of running our school. We must make a case each year to get funding from the state and we must run a variety of fund-raisers to supplement our funding. Even with all these efforts it is still not enough.

It is astonishing to me that a school like CG, that has made such progress, would continue to have to fight so hard for money. Last year, CGHS was the only Connecticut high school that was able to get itself off the NCLB list. We also won the praise of state education officials during our charter renewal process and we were rewarded with a 5 year renewal of our charter. Despite these accomplishments we are still receiving significantly less money per pupil than the average public school in Connecticut.

We accomplished those two major goals with an incredibly dedicated staff and a student body that recognizes the opportunity that CGHS presents for them. Many of the students and staff arrive at school between 7 and 7:30 in the morning and are here until 4 or 5 pm in the evening. Student success often depends on our after school academic programs that help students who arrive at CGHS below grade level or run into problems with their classes during the normal course of the year.

As critical as these programs are to our student's academic achievement most of the money for these programs comes from fund raising. The availability of such critical programs should not depend on our fund raising success. Additionally, teachers are an integral part of these programs and are regularly scheduled to support them. Although time spent one on one with students is invaluable in many ways, this is time that teachers cannot work on their lesson planning or improving the curriculum for their courses. It would also be more equitable if teachers could be appropriately compensated for their dedication in supporting these after school programs.

This is just one example of how being short changed on funding impacts students and staff at CGHS. There are many others that I could discuss, but suffice it to say that the unequal funding significantly impacts what we can offer our students and how far our students can go. It also makes a difficult job like teaching that much more difficult and stressful. I often wonder how much more we could accomplish if we had truly equitable funding in Connecticut. Please

consider taking this opportunity to finally making the funding equitable in this state and allow those of us in charter schools to build on the success we have already had at our schools.

Sincerely,

Larry Dome

Math Teacher – Common Ground High School