

Testimony of Forest Hoefflinger
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Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee
March 24th, 2011

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

School has never really been a place that I found to be very alluring. I attended school from kindergarten through 2nd grade and much of it was a struggle for me. As a solution my mother decided to start homeschooling me. I found this to be quite a monumental help and I was able to perform much better at my work.

After many years of homeschooling, I was presented with the prospect of going back to public school. This was a very tough decision considering I had not been acquainted with public school for nearly six years. Despite this, I liked the idea of going to school as a "new" experience. While looking into public schools and talking to my friends in my area I almost wanted to take back my decision; public school didn't really seem like the place for me. Then, on the verge of giving up on the idea of returning to school, I began to look into charter and magnet school and my search was rekindled. I found many schools yet only a few schools caught my eye. Common Ground High School (CG) happened to be one of these schools.

I had always been very interested in sciences so an ecological high school felt like a great fit for me. I found CG to also be a close-knit group of teachers and students who take pride in each other as well as in their school. Every aspect of this school was great. Everything is hands on and involved. Working in CG's organic garden is not uncommon nor is taking care of the different animals such as the chickens, the goats,

and even the turtles. The only unfortunate thing is that more students cannot experience this amazing school.

With the current charter school budget, it is tough to sustain more than a small number of students and staff. This means that not many students are able to enjoy CG as my friends and I are able to do. It also means that there is less staff, who would also enjoy the school, to teach differing classes that the current students would be able to enjoy and benefit from. For example, many public schools, with their different funding, are able to have PE classes year round. We, because of our inadequate funding, are not able to do so. There are many things that we could do with this increase in funding that would not only benefit the school, its students and faculty, it would also benefit the surrounding community, considering the school works closely with the New Haven community.

Receiving this increase in money would provide more people with the opportunity to come and enjoy the school either as student or as faculty. They would be able to become part of the family that is Common Ground. This is a one of a kind school and all the people who go to it can easily see that. It is only right that my school should receive the same funding as a public school that may not be as involved with their students. Common Ground deserves adequate funding and should not be put at a disadvantage simply because it is a charter school. Charter schools are just as important as public schools and should be treated accordingly.

Sincerely,

Forest Hoefflinger