

Testimony of Byrute Johnson  
Teacher at Common Ground High School,  
358 Springside Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515  
Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee  
March 24th, 2011

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

My name is Byrute Johnson and I'm here tonight to show my support for Fair Funding for Common Ground High School.

My daughter is a sophomore at Common Ground. She also spent her freshmen year at Common Ground. As a freshman, my daughter was enriched by all the activities she was offered. She had an opportunity to shadow a college student at University of New Haven where she got a feel for what college life is like. This past summer, my daughter also had the opportunity to take an enrichment program at Southern Connecticut. Since my daughter has been at Common Ground high school, I have seen a total transformation in her. She has flourished at Common Ground. Her study habits have improved and I am just amazed how focused she is and how positive she is about her work, her school and herself. My daughter is in a school that gives her a tremendous educational environment where she has many choices and is thriving as a student. She has told me on numerous occasions how she absolutely loves Common Ground. So I asked her: "What do you love about Common Ground?" She says, "Mom, I love the vibe I get from my classmates and my teachers bring so much passion and energy that my classes fly by." Common Ground just clicks for my daughter.

So we're demanding a fair and radical change, and I'll tell you why. Charter schools should have the same share of funding as traditional public schools, and Common Ground deserves Fair Funding. My daughter and the students at Common Ground are being shortchanged. Each Common ground student accounts for \$9,300 vs. 14,000 for a traditional public schools student. Is that fair? It's not. The answer is simple: the money needs to follow the student, no matter what school they choose to go to. That's all we are asking for-- a fair share of the funds per student.

Common Ground is the epitome of an American education. These students thrive academically in this environment. With fair funding, Common Ground teachers can be paid salaries they deserve. With fair funding, they can expand programs such as Arts and Music. With fair funding, more additional computer equipment can be purchased. With fair funding, Common Ground students can continue to enjoy a plethora of options.

As a whole, Common Ground has done more with fewer resources, but we owe it to our children to have the same funding as everyone else. As parents, we're asking that Common Ground receive the same funding for each student that is given to students in the public school system.

Common Ground High School is a special place. The school and it's faculty are family and their actions reinforce that description. The Common Ground teachers inspire their students and it shows. The school is special and the students demonstrate a love of Common Ground that does "not" exist in every school. Common Ground students are taught the importance of being involved in their local community and being active in caring for the environment. Students at Common Ground understand that as young adults their responsibility is extended back to the community.

We need you to fix the financial gap for Common Ground, where my daughter has been enriched and has succeeded as a student. Common Ground is a great school and it's the right choice for my daughter. I don't think she needs to be penalized for this choice.

Thank you for your time.