Testimony for Education Hearing 2/23 for the Connecticut Charter School Network

Submitted by CCSN Director Jo Lutz and CCSN President Dr. Michael Sharpe

The Connecticut Charter School Network stands behind the governor's decision to maintain education funding at current levels despite the hard economic times faced by the state of Connecticut. But even more important than a lifeline right now is the commitment to overhaul the education funding formula for the future. We support the governor's formation of a commission to make education funding in Connecticut fair, consistent, transparent, and efficient, and we applaud his directive to come up with a clear action plan on a clear timeframe. However, there have been several such commissions in the past and none have accomplished this lofty goal, so we believe this difficult work should start as soon as possible and include as many stakeholders as possible. No past commission or committee to study school funding has included a representative from the charter schools, though they have been central to this debate. Charter schools are held up as both a silver bullet for education woes and as a threat to the existence of public school as we know it, neither of which scenario is realistic but without the presence of the charter community itself at the table, policy discussion risk becoming echo chambers for these perspectives. Thus the Connecticut Charter School Network wishes both to insist on our own behalf and to recommend for the sake of process that a direct representative of the charter schools, such as the President of the Charter School Network, be appointed to this latest and hopefully final commission to study ECS.