

**Jessica Malaykhan, Achievement First,  
Education Committee Hearing, March 7, 2011**

Good evening Members of the Education Committee.

My name is Jessica Malaykhan, and my daughter Hannah has been a student at Achievement First Hartford Middle School since fifth grade. Hannah is now a 7<sup>th</sup>-grader and she and I are both strong supporters of the school. I apologize that work has prevented me from attending the committee hearing in person; I attended the Appropriations Committee hearing last week and I wanted to make sure you knew my thoughts about the school, its principal and its teachers.

It is hard to say what we appreciate most about Achievement First. Hannah and I both know that her teachers care about her, and that they have high expectations for her. She knows that college is not an option but a given because of the environment the school has created for her. I know that I am truly a partner in Hannah's education, because the school involves me in her learning and progress.

I am a strong believer in Achievement First for all these reasons, but I am most thankful for the dedication of her teachers and her principal. Hannah has excelled because of them and sets high goals for herself with their support. She looks forward to going to school each day because she knows everyone in that building will help her achieve her dreams. They are the best teachers she has had as long as she has been in school, and it shows in her performance and her academic outcomes.

I'm not sure which of her teachers are certified, and honestly I am not concerned. Their certification has not changed the way they teach, the way they care or the way they commit to my daughter every day. Bill 1104 would allow great teachers to keep doing what they do – educating children like Hannah and ensuring their futures are as bright as possible.

Hartford is a choice district, so students are chosen for Achievement First by blind lottery. Last year, more families chose Achievement First than any other school. Like me, those families did not ask about teacher certification. They only wanted to know that when they entrusted their children to the school that it would be a place that would nurture their children and equip them with the tools they need to accomplish any goal.

Achievement First consistently demonstrates its ability to close the achievement gap and deliver on its promise to children. Why not honor those feats instead of thwarting them? Please support Bill 1104 – our families are counting on you.

Thank you.