Testimony of Michael McGuire

Director of School Support Services
Domus Schools (Stamford Academy – Trailblazers Academy – Domus Academy)

My name is Michael McGuire. I am a former social studies teacher and school principal and now serve as the director of school support services for the three Domus schools in Stamford and New Haven. I am speaking in support of the Governor's proposed education reforms. Our organization, Domuskids, believes these reforms make sense for the children of our state and most specifically for the children that we serve; the economically deprived, the socially and emotionally struggling, the impoverished, and the most at-risk in our state.

Since the inception of our two charter schools, we have operated in deficit mode ($5-8,000 per student), supplementing our per-pupil shortfall with private donations, constructing strategic partnerships with local school boards and soliciting in-kind donations from municipalities. It has been a struggle to serve our students and families.

To reiterate our prior testimonies before this committee, our organization serves the most disenfranchised students in our state. We continue to solicit students that have failed in our public school systems or, put more frankly, students our school systems have failed to educate. While the reasons for this failure are somewhat complex, suffice it to say that our students continue to enter our school 3 to 5 years behind grade-level in literacy and computation. As well, more than half of our students have been involved with the criminal justice system and the Department of Children and Families. Over 80% qualify for free and reduced lunch and many have social and emotional issues. Further, over 25% of our student population has been identified as students with Special Education needs. This is three times the state average.

Given all of that, we are asked to operate our schools with less federal, state and local funding than that of our public school counterparts. The proposed increases in the per-pupil allocation from the state and the local LEA participation requirement are steps that are long over-due; steps that we fully support.

With the Governor's proposed increase in funding, we will be able to consider future initiatives such as: hiring additional literacy and special education staff to serve the most struggling students.

As always, I want to thank the members of the appropriations committee for their support and am prepared to answer any questions you may have regarding my testimony or our schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael McGuire - Director of School Support Services - Domus Schools