Hello, thank you for allowing me to tell my story. My name is Doris Boiczyk, I'm a parent at Explorations Charter School in Winsted.

My journey to Explorations was long and difficult. My husband and I value education, so when my son was entering Elementary school we moved to an affluent town whose public school system had a stellar reputation. My son appeared to be doing fine until 2nd grade, when he began to show signs of academic struggle and social anxiety. As a nurse, I know the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. I asked the school to have him tested, and that's where the trouble began. After the school resisted, I had him tested myself by a private specialist, and it turned out he has neurological disorder that causes a mild learning disability and social difficulties similar to Aspergers. At first, his school refused to provide services because he had been tested elsewhere, then once an advocate got involved they moved him from the regular classroom into a resource room that he shared with a very low-functioning classmate with no access to the normal curriculum, though his academic disability was mild. He was now in 6th grade and his anxiety was debilitating, and his trauma was wreaking havoc on our family. His experience at the high-performing affluent school we'd so carefully chosen culminated with a bullying incident that involved verbal and physical abuse in front of several adults. The school, which had first claimed he had no special needs, now claimed his needs were so great that they could not meet them. He was placed in a specialized school for very high needs children. On top of learning nothing at all, my hyper-sensitive child was daily witness to children with severe disabilities having to be physically restrained. That was when I tried to homeschool. At this point my son was missing a lot of school anyways because he refused to attend, and I couldn't think of a single reason why he should. I did homeschool him briefly, but between the cost of the curriculum and the fact that I couldn't work, it became too expensive.

That's when we heard about Explorations. My son and I visited, and to my surprise and elation, he said, "Mom, I think this is a place I could go." Explorations is small and supportive, the staff is extremely responsive, and there is zero tolerance for bullying. Without Explorations, it would not have been possible for him to get into or to attend

college. Now I'm proud to say that my son now has a full scholarship to the University of Hartford for Engineering.

It's so tragic to think that all this happened in spite of our doing everything right. We moved to the right district, got advice from professionals every step of the way and did what they told us. The whole time all he needed was a different school environment, and it was ~~just~~considered too much to ask. I'm grateful that we finally found the right school for him, but I wish there were more like it, for students everywhere at all grade levels, not just in urban centers. Connecticut needs to offer more options, and needs to fund all schools and students fairly. I know something's not right when the school that failed my child is doing fine but the school that's been his salvation has us selling things from catalogues and donating toilet paper and silverware just to make ends meet.

Please support the governor's proposal to increase charter funding. ~~to $12,000, i~~It's the least they deserve and they ought to have whatever the other schools get. Thank you again for hearing my testimony.