Appropriations Testimony, February 2012

To the Members of the Appropriations Committees:

Good evening, and thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Tiffany Johnson, I am the founding science teacher and co-teacher representative on the Board of Park City Prep Charter School in Bridgeport. Park City Prep Charter School was founded in 2006 by Bruce Ravage to address the underrepresentation of minorities in the fields of science, technology, and mathematics.

Park City Prep Charter School is a public charter school, servicing approximately 250 students in grades 6-8. Currently, our teachers, due to lack of equitable funding, have to provide lots of extra staff support: they are part-time social workers, custodians, professional development specialists, and more. Although we have been fortunate to utilize our monies as needed, there are still some things that we are in dire need of that can be purchased if the legislature approves the Governor's proposal to fund charter schools at $12,000 per pupil. Park City Prep Charter School currently has their students eat lunch inside their classrooms because we do not currently have a cafeteria space to house our students for lunch, or even school-wide assemblies. Park City Prep Charter School does not have a library, but currently store over 3,000 books in metal cabinets located in our common room and computer lab. Currently, we are renting space in an industrial factory building that also houses a tractor-trailer school. Because of this, our students are subjected to loud noise during Independent readings, and a variety of other distractions that come with not having our own building. The extra funding will allow us to move into a more reasonable learning environment.

I believe strongly not only in the work of my school, but that one size education doe not fit all learners. If we are truly serious about making sure every child achieves, we need to offer a variety of schools to meet their diverse needs and interests. We need a funding system that allows for choice, funds all students and schools fairly, and breaks down rather than creates arbitrary barriers.

As a teacher, I have seen the tremendous impact that Park City Prep Charter School has on its students and graduates. We have had many students from our school gain acceptance into many public and private choice schools. Contrary to the popular belief that we are able to hand select students who enter our school, we accept students by blind lottery, meaning all students, have a fair and equal chance for gaining acceptance into our school. We take pride in doing our job of educating our students. Because of this, we have outperformed our Home school district in two or more areas on the CMTs consistently since our opening.

It is for these reasons, both as a teacher since the school's opening, and as a Member of the Board of Directors, I implore the committee and the rest of the legislature to support the Governor's proposal. We need to invest in a funding system that allows

for choice, funds all students and schools fairly, and breaks down rather than create arbitrary barriers. Thank you for your time and consideration.