

Testimony of Charlie Dow  
Student at Common Ground High School,  
358 Springside Avenue, New Haven, CT 06515  
Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee  
February 21st, 2012

Honorable Chairs, Members of the Appropriation Committee:

I am Charlie Dow, a sophomore at Common Ground High School, a charter school in New Haven. Common Ground has allowed me to learn on my own level and not have to endure a class that I have already taken in previous grades. This school has also allowed me to meet many diverse people from different cities and towns in Connecticut, who I may have not been able to meet at a one-town public school. At Common Ground, we learn “traditional” subjects, but at the same time we also learn environmental “big ideas” that run through all subjects and facets of life.

Our school gets less per student funding than public schools in districts who send students to Common Ground. Because of this we have to rely on grants or competitions in order to get more funds to supply more learning resources. Due to Common Ground’s funding situation, we don’t always have enough resources for a class. In a couple of classes such as Algebra II, there are not enough books for all the students in the classes. With a \$2600 increase in funding per student we could have enough money for books for these classes and other classes that may lack resources.

At Common Ground we have a variety of after school programs. One is our Robotics Club. When Robotics club first started we had a teacher who would monitor us while my friend

Jonathon and I would lead discussions and activities. At one point, we lost the teacher and faced the club being shut down. Luckily, though, one of the science teachers said he would watch us. After the addition of a new teacher to the school, we were able to have a more permanent after school facilitator who could also show us how to do things such as solder and how to program the robot. A lot of the parts we received are parts that we are borrowing; they were going to be thrown out or not used, or were found lying around (like a shopping cart in the river). Robotics club only had a \$100 dollar budget which is now \$0 because that money was spent for two introduction kits, robots made out of toothbrushes, and a small autonomous robot which can be controlled by a T.V. remote. We now have to fundraise in order to get parts like an Arduino so we can build our own robot from the old P.C. tower and the shopping cart we have. With this \$2600 bonus in funding per student we could have a permanent staff member who could help us and a budget which allows us adequate funds to perform this project.

Thank you and have a good evening.