

Hello and thank you for taking the time to listen to what I have to say. I am Sandy Lefkowitz, the Director of Westport Cinema Initiative and a Board member of the Bridge Academy.

Within the State of Ct the cost for the education of the individual student has great disparity. This is a complicated issue, but certainly within a district we need to take steps to insure that the children's education has financial parity. It is punitive to impede the flexibility and creativity established in the Public Charter School model by not supporting them to the full extent of the host district's financial resources. Charter Schools offer choices to families who cannot choose what district they live in –and can't choose a private school.

A program, of which I have intimate knowledge, is the film/media program – “The Art of Filmmaking”. 4 years ago I brought this program to Bridge Academy. It was introduced into the school curriculum through collaboration with the Westport Arts Center, The Westport Sunrise Rotary, MSG Varsity, The Fairfield County Community Foundation, and the administration and faculty of the Bridge Academy.

If the legislature approves the Governor's proposal to fund charter schools at \$12,00 per pupil Bridge Academy will be able to insure the sustainability of its operations and programs into the future without the insecurity of relying on outside contributions

The students at Bridge Academy have the advantage of visionary and inclusive leadership. The Administration and Faculty of Bridge Academy in partnership with the Board of Trustees have formed a school culture of responsibility and accountability that promotes lateral learning through

experiences and programs that reinforce the academic requirements, of which The Art of Filmmaking is one.

This has given students the opportunity to benefit from a course of study that has supported learning new technology, enhancing critical thinking skills, developing inventive problem solving, and perhaps most significantly it has encouraged students to work in concert--in teams.

We measure an investment by the return on the investment. The return for the money given to the Bridge Academy gives students the best chance at becoming productive and proud citizens wherever they reside. In an interview the students were filming with Mayor Finch the student filmmakers, were told, "I am so glad to speak with you today; you are the future. Keep working at making things better."

District schools and Charter schools should be encouraged to work together to develop innovations that would benefit all students, not have to fight for dollars.

We need to fund an educational system that values the differences in students' learning styles. It is up to the legislators to make the investment in all students. Thank you for considering support for Governor Malloy's proposal to increase funding for the Charter Schools.