Erika Haynes, Resident, Town of Windham
Written Testimony
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Thursday, February 21, 2013

I would like to thank co-chairs Senator Harp and Representative Walker and the members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Governor Malloy's education budget proposals. My name is Erika Haynes and I am a mother of four children, ages 3 to 18, and a former member of the Windham Town Council.

I am testifying in support of Governor Malloy's education budget proposals. The governor's budget includes funding for key measures of last year's landmark education reform law, which received overwhelming support from the General Assembly.

More specifically, I would like to advocate for fully investing in three key measures of last year's education reform law: a Statewide teacher and principal evaluation program; the Commissioner's Network, a turnaround effort for the lowest-performing schools in our state; and, support for public charter schools.

The new system for teacher and principal evaluation provides a way to identify and support the state's best teachers, while at the same time offering feedback, professional development and training for those educators who need it, and a swift process for removal of educators who consistently fail to improve. Financially, when we evaluate, we can better target our professional development to support teacher needs, and garner a greater return on investment for professional development.

Last year's law also included a per-pupil increase for charter schools, an important first step toward closing the disparities between how students at public schools of choice and traditional public schools are funded by the state. December's deficit mitigation slashed $2 million — $300 per pupil. Equitably funding students, regardless of the school they attend, is essential to guarantee the success of all students in Connecticut, not just some of the students.

Finally, the Commissioner's Network, created as part of last year's groundbreaking education reform law (Public Act 12-116), aims to turnaround Connecticut's lowest-performing schools. In Windham, we have already seen the concrete results that this Network will provide to other schools and other districts. Test scores have improved and students are directly benefitting from this. Schools that are struggling need these types of support in order to make significant change and significant improvement.

All three of these measures will help thousands of students receive the high-quality education they deserve, realize a brighter future, and ensure a strong economic future for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.