

**Elizabeth Smith  
Hartford Public School Parent  
Testimony for Appropriations Hearing  
Thursday February 21, 2013**

Hello, my name is Elizabeth Smith. I am here tonight not just to ask for your support in ensuring fair funding, but also to respond to common criticisms we've heard of our schools. In particular, we've heard countless times that our children don't deserve fair funding because they're different, or because they've been "creamed." We want to assure you that is not true. Charter school students are admitted by random lottery, and many of the families here tonight—including me—have children with special needs.

My child has an IEP, and has struggled at points throughout his educational career in school. For a short time, he attended a different middle school, and while they tried hard, his needs were not met. I've found that Achievement First's schools support his special needs. Instead of his reading level dropping, it's skyrocketing.

We have long way to go to ensure that Connecticut's public charter schools become an equal part of OUR public school system. The demand for charter schools in our state is high, and charter growth has not kept up with parent demand. Our charter schools serve the highest need students, in some of the lowest performing districts in our state. We are eager to grow and serve more students across the state, but our schools simply can't do this without equitable and predictable funding.