

Testimony Submitted to  
Appropriations Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly

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Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools

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Co-Chairs Senator Harp and Representative Walker, Vice-Chairs Senator Hartley and Representative Flexer, Representative Miller and Representative O'Brien; and Ranking Members Senator Kane and Rep. Miner and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools.

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and for your ongoing support of Hartford Public Schools. Our success over the years is due in great part to the members of this committee.

Second, I want to publicly thank Governor Malloy and Commissioner Pryor for their leadership on school reform and continued commitment to revitalizing struggling schools so that every child in the State of Connecticut can have a quality education.

As you may know, for seven years Hartford Public Schools has been engaged in a significant reform effort. Our efforts have resulted in the reduction of the achievement gap in the City of Hartford by one-third. We have done this in an era of diminishing resources.

In fact, in the last five years we experienced a modest budget increase and that occurred this current fiscal year. In the years prior to that, we saw flat budgets and budget reductions. As a result, we faced a reduction in force of more than 500 positions since the beginning of our reform. Our Central Office administration, alone, has been reduced by 110 positions.

I wholeheartedly support Governor Malloy's proposal to increase ECS funding for Alliance Districts such as ours. We also support the Commissioner's Network, as it creates an opportunity to develop new school models that provide the flexibility and supports needed to turn around low-performing schools. Every student matters.

The Commissioner's ECS proposal recognizes that Hartford Public Schools is in a different situation than other districts, in that we have seven years of experience in the work of school reform and have made very tough budgetary decisions from the very beginning. We welcome our partnership with the Connecticut Department of Education in this regard.

When we began this work only 48% of our resources were concentrated directly in the classroom. I am proud to say that 75% of our resources are in the classroom and 25% support central services (E.g. Transportation, Special Education, etc.). We are at the point in which it is not possible for us to further reduce our administration services.

Hartford has already started the process of training teachers and principals to incorporate the new Common Core state standards, even as it prepares students for the new and more complex Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium test that will replace the CMT and the CAPT in 2014-2015. And, as stated by the commissioner, we will need the support of the Connecticut State Department of Education to continue this work, which drives instructional quality.

As one of the state's fastest improving districts, we would require the highest level of flexibility in the use of additional Alliance District dollars and any other state grants because, as you can see, we have already aligned our strategic work with the Governor's reform proposal.

Thus, we continue to support the State Department of Education's ability to differentiate assistance based on each district's ability and readiness to engage in each of the commissioner's areas of reform work.

I urge you to approve the Governor's ECS funding recommendations and other related education initiatives.

Thank you.