



**Connecticut General Assembly Education Committee**  
Friday, February 15, 2013

**Testimony of Jeri Powell, State Director, Great New England Public Schools Alliance (GNEPSA) Before the Connecticut General Assembly Education Committee on H.B. No. 6357, "AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION"**

Co-Chairs Stillman and Fleischmann, and members of the committee:

My name is Jeri Powell, State Director of the Great New England Public Schools Alliance. I thank you for this opportunity to offer comments regarding H.B. No. 6357.

We applaud Governor Malloy and the legislature for continuing to stand tall for children, and placing a high priority on improving education across Connecticut. We all share a common vision to ensure every child in Connecticut has an equal opportunity to obtain a great education. For years, education has been deemed the great equalizer in our society. I find this to be true, and I also believe common sense education reform can provide rare common ground amongst Democrats and Republicans.

HB No. 6357 places a high priority on improving education across Connecticut. We acknowledge that this is no easy feat in the face of challenging fiscal times for the state. With that in mind, we respectfully note several points we hope you will consider as you move forward with your important work this year.

**Reduction in Charter School Funding**

- We encourage the committee to consider the importance of equitable school funding in Connecticut so that ALL schools have sufficient resources to meet the unique needs of students attending that school.
- Furthermore, all public school students, regardless of the type of school they choose to attend, deserve comparable resources for their education. Each public school student in Connecticut is equal under the law, and we don't hold our students to different standards based on whether they attend a public neighborhood school, public magnet school, or public charter school.
- Our current educational system already puts students attending charter schools at a disadvantage by receiving less per-pupil spending than a traditional public school would receive to educate the same student.
- We encourage the committee to take all measures to protect the funding currently allocated for charter school students by the Governor's budget, with a view towards equitable funding for all students.

**Funding Allocation**

- We advocate for governance structures and policies that put a premium on student achievement, and to the extent practical, we encourage innovation and believe this is achieved in part when funding is not restricted.
- The bill in its current form would take additional funding allocations, above the amount designated previously, from the lowest-achieving districts (alliance districts) and allow the Commissioner to redistribute in the form of targeted grants. These reallocated funds must be spent in accordance with the application requirements and restricts the spending flexibility for school districts.
- We would recommend empowering the Commissioner with a *separate* source of discretionary funds to support academically challenged schools and districts without infringing upon their formulaic funding designations and flexibility.

While the Governor's support for charter school growth in his biennial state budget proposal will provide more quality education options for families, we hope the legislature considers our recommendations and explores other transformative reforms this session.

We look forward to continued work with the Governor, State Legislature and key stakeholders to increase transparency and accountability in an effort to ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely for the benefit of students.

Thank you for your time.