



Where the future is present.

Testimony Submitted to
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
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Friday, March 15, 2013

Co-Chairs Senator Andrea Stillman and Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Vice-Chairs Senator Beth Bye and Representative Douglas McCrory, Ranking Members Senator Toni Boucher and Rep. Tim Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education 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 to testify in support of House Bill No. 6622, "An Act Concerning District Partnerships, and for your ongoing support of Hartford Public Schools. Our success over the years is due in great part to the hard work of the members of this committee.

Second, I want to publicly thank Gov. Dannel Malloy and Commissioner Stefan Pryor for their leadership on school reform and commitment to deliver a quality education to every child in Connecticut.

As you know, the pilot program for district-charter partnerships that was authorized by this committee and the legislature in 2008 included the Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport school districts.

The timing of the legislation was perfect for us. We were in the midst of framing our school reform strategy based on a portfolio district approach and, in so doing; we were interested in attracting research-based, high quality school designs.

That year, we implemented 13 new designs, including our partnership with the Achievement First charter management organization that produced the Achievement First Hartford Academy.

Under the terms of the partnership, Hartford Public Schools provides Achievement First with a physical plant and operational support, including transportation, custodial services, security and meals and, in return, Achievement First provides a high-performing school whose test scores and other pertinent information are incorporated into the district's performance data.

The partnership has been an incredible success because we are true partners sharing best practices across two organizations. Each of us adds value to the other.

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Since 2008, the Achievement First Hartford Academy has expanded to include a K-4 elementary school, a grade 5-8 middle grades school and the freshman year of what will grow into a 9-12 high school. The school serves 881 Hartford-only resident students, who are chosen through a district-administered lottery.

Most importantly, the Achievement First Hartford Academy has become Hartford's highest performing neighborhood school by far with a school performance index (SPI) of 73.2.

The relationship has been so successful, in fact, that Hartford Public Schools was recently awarded a \$5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to deepen the collaboration with Achievement First and the Jumoke Academy charter school organizations. Our district intends to use the additional funds to further align its existing work to Common Core State Standards and advance college readiness in both district and charter schools.

If House Bill #6622 is not approved, the relationship between Hartford Public Schools and Achievement First via a Board adopted Memorandum of Understanding will automatically be voided, thereby leaving nearly 900 students without their school, and a potential redistribution of those students throughout the district.

Additionally, extending district-charter partnerships to include all of the alliance districts creates a viable means of replicating the performance successes of the Hartford/Achievement First partnership; a proven student-centered governance partnership model.

We need to be willing to question and change our ways of practice based on proven innovative school designs and leverage our capacity across organizations on behalf of students. That's what you have in House Bill No. 6622.



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