Pastor Eldren Morrison
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 24, 2014

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of the governor's budget recommendations. I am Reverend Eldren Morrison, Senior Pastor at Varick Memorial AME Zion Church, New Haven's first African American congregation. Connecticut must continue investing in education reforms that prepare kids for college.

In urban centers like New Haven, too often our children fall behind. According to the State Department of Education, in New Haven, three out of 10 students don't graduate on time. Only a little more than half of New Haven's African American 3rd graders are reading on grade level. By the time a student gets to the 10th grade, that number drops to four in 10. That is the unacceptable reality that families in New Haven face every day.

The governor's budget proposal builds on the critical investments this committee voted in favor of back in 2012. Those education reforms include the creation and fair funding of new public school options, ensuring every school has high-performing teachers, and raises standards to make sure kids are prepared for college and good careers. A year later, member of this committee again saw fit to stand strong. You did not go back on those promises.

This year, I am one of nine applicants hoping to launch charter schools in Connecticut. Should it be approved, the Booker T. Washington Academy will help meet the demand expressed by the thousands of Connecticut parents who want access to high-quality charter schools. You have the chance to stand strong again, to keep the promise you made in 2012, and to help us, on the ground in the community, make sure that every student in Connecticut has the tools they need to find success in college and in the jobs of tomorrow. Thank you.