

Migdalia Salas

Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication, (ISAAC)

Appropriations Committee Testimony

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Connecticut's charter schools and families. I am Migdalia Salas director of development and community relations at the Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC) located in New London. I am also a former Board Member and proud parent of an ISAAC alumnus. We offer a free, expeditionary learning experience to middle school students from more than (20) towns and cities throughout southeastern connecticut.

The General Assembly and Governor should be commended for supporting a per-pupil increase in charter school funding last year. The continued support for more charter funding, demonstrated in the current budget by recommitment to \$11,000 next year, is helping to keep our doors open and our programs in place.

In spite of the recent funding increases, fundraising is still crucially important to our school, and without significant commitments from the community it would be much harder to accomplish all that we do each day. I am intimately familiar with the resources from which district schools benefit daily. I can say without hesitation that charter schools are still critically underfunded compared to our counterparts.

I believe it is important to acknowledge that the increase up to \$11,000 per student is starting to close the wide-gap between charters and district schools. However, it would be remiss to ignore the vast inequity that still exists in the way charters are funded. According to data found in the 2011 Census files, the New London district spends \$16,661 per student. That is a gap of nearly \$6,000 per child even after the next increase fully takes effect.

ISAAC serves 248 students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. We recently increased our student population from 191 to 248 and completed a renovation project that provides our students their first ever physical education and assembly space as well as (8) new classrooms, in a major building project, the accomplishments of which we are rightfully proud. We are implementing expeditionary learning with a commitment to meeting the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. We understand what it takes for our students achieve and succeed.

At ISAAC, we appreciate the increased commitment from the Governor and the General Assembly and assure our legislators and constituents that with this on-going support ISAAC will continue to grow ensure the academic achievement of our students.