Molly Haynes, Town of Windham
Written Testimony
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Monday, February 24, 2014

I would like to thank co-chairs Senator Bye and Representative Walker and the members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Governor Malloy's education budget proposals. My name is Molly Haynes and I have been a resident of Willimantic for my entire life and am currently a social work student at Eastern Connecticut State University.

I am testifying in support of Governor Malloy's education budget proposals. As someone who has made use of school choice in Connecticut, this is the most appealing part of this budget proposal. I attended Great Path Academy, a magnet school for my last three years of high school because it offered significantly more to me than Windham Public Schools was able to. By expanding charter school funding, our state will only be increasing a child's access to quality education. Particularly since over 90 percent of existing, as well as proposed, charter schools are located in the lowest-performing districts in the state.

I'm here because too many kids in Windham do not have access to the great schools that I had access to while growing up. The statistics are staggering. Right now, only one out of three 3rd graders in Windham are reading at grade level, and nearly one third of Windham students don't graduate on time. That's not acceptable. We can do better for the next generation of Windham kids.

This hits home for me. My mother, Ericka Haynes, is working with community leaders and parents to launch a local charter school – Nuestra Comunidad – in Windham focused on helping English Language Learners get the high-quality education they deserve. I support my mother's efforts to help kids and am so proud of her.

Every child deserves the right to a quality education, regardless of his or her family's income and regardless of where he or she lives. Nearly half of third graders in Connecticut cannot read at grade level, and two-third of African Americans, Latinos, and low-income students in Connecticut cannot read at grade level. Approximately 80 percent of charter schools in Connecticut out-perform the schools of the host district, according to the State Department of Education. This budget proposal promotes educational justice in the fact that it equips Connecticut children with the tools for high academic achievement.