

**Testimony of Graciela Rivera
Before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education**

*In Support of the State Department of Education budget
with funding for Magnet Schools and other Sheff v. O'Neill integration programs*

*Submitted by
Graciela Rivera, Parent; Montessori Magnet at Moylan
76 Glendale St., Hartford, CT 06106*

March 3, 2015

Thank you Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Graciela Rivera and I am from Hartford.

Our school is great and here's why: 4 years ago my daughter started at Montessori Magnet @ Moylan/McDonough in the pre-k 3 program. She only spoke Spanish when she started and I was very concerned about her not being able to communicate with the staff. There wasn't a day where my daughter was afraid to go to school because of the lack of being able to speak English. At first it was a struggle, but after a few months and a lot of patience and dedication from her teacher she picked up on the language. She is now a very avid reader. Ever since she became a Montessori student she has flourished. she is excited about learning everyday, and Montessori education keeps her inquisitive mind constantly engaged. She is doing things that I personally did not do until I got to High School such as research and presentations. We have very dedicated teachers. I couldn't feel any luckier for having the opportunity for my daughter to go to a school where everyone works as a team. We are a tight knit community that embraces diversity, and a place where children are always put first above everything else.

We need to grow but in order for that to happen we need a new building. It is an inadequate space for a Montessori school to continue to thrive due to the limited space available and being divided between two schools. Our children deserve more.

The new Sheff agreement includes state funding to find a new space for us, so I urge you to approve the new agreement because it will make a difference in the lives of our children.

Please continue to support all magnet schools.

Thank you!