

Opening Statement
by
Maria I. Mojica
Nominee for Member of the State Board of Education

Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee Hearing
February 3, 2015

Good morning (afternoon), Senator Duff, Representative Janowski, Senator Kane, Representative Buck-Taylor and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. My name is Maria Isabel Mojica. I am honored to be appointed by Governor Dannel P. Malloy to the State Board of Education.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before you and speak to my interest in serving on the State Board of Education.

Connecticut has been my home since 1974, when I entered Yale College. I married in New Haven and with my husband raised our daughter in the Town of Hamden. I was born in Puerto Rico and raised in Brooklyn, New York. I am a proud public school graduate. I hold a Master's degree from the Yale School of Epidemiology and Public Health and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (1978), --also from Yale University.

Today I am here before you because of a caring family and encouraging teachers and school counselors. I personally have experienced the transformative effects of education. I am committed to developing a public education system that by design and not by chance, supports the best possible outcomes for children.

I am fortunate to have been presented with multiple professional opportunities to work closely with communities and organizations in our state.

Currently as an independent consultant, my clients are philanthropic and nonprofit organizations in the state. I work with organizations in transition, leading change efforts and applying research to improve practices.

For over 28 years I have worked in Connecticut's philanthropic sector. Most recently, as Vice president for Program at the Hartford Foundation, I deepen my understanding of major educational issues and trends and their impact on children throughout the Greater Hartford region. We awarded grants that spanned the age and grade continuum, from birth to a career. It was gratifying to be part of a broad education agenda.

As Senior Program Officer at the Graustein Memorial Fund, I worked on early care and education issues facing children and their families. The Memorial Fund is a Connecticut based family foundation focusing on education in Connecticut. I was

responsible for the design and management of the *Children First Initiative*, and lead staff to the Discovery Initiative. In that capacity I worked with fifty Connecticut cities and towns, nonprofit organizations and several state departments on issues affecting young children.

I was the first Executive Director of the *Futures Initiative* an innovative nonprofit organization addressing social and educational issues affecting Bridgeport's at-risk urban youth and families.

My personal and professional experiences prepare me to serve on the State Board of Education. Early in my professional career, I committed to do all I can to improve educational outcomes for children. I have worked in three of our major urban centers, Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven.

We are engaged in efforts to close the achievement gap, improve overall student achievement and identify the next Commissioner of Education. I bring the experience and perspective required for decision-making by the Board. It is this diversity that produces sound educational policy.

I want to thank Governor Malloy and the committee for the opportunity to serve on the State Board of Education, and make a positive difference in the lives our children and our state's future.