

Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Elementary and Secondary Education Subgroup  
Public Hearing: March 3, 2015  
Testimony by Thembi Fulse, Resident of Windsor

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Thembi Fulse. I am a resident of Windsor, and my son and daughter attend the Museum Academy in Bloomfield.

I have two children attending a magnet school here in Connecticut. As a person who is a transplant to the area, I was happy to see that there was an opportunity for my 3 year old daughter to attend a Pre-K program. Coming from Washington, DC where Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 programs are available at all public schools for all DC residents that are age eligible; I knew that having a Pre-K program is very important in the educational growth of a child. I am disappointed that I was not able to give my 7 year old son the same opportunity as my daughter. We sent our son to a pre-school in our town, which my husband and I paid for, and when my son arrived to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, he was unprepared. My husband and I ended up keeping my son back a year in school because of his lack of preparation, and because we did not want him to struggle in school. We sent our son to a private school, paid for him to go to speech therapy and tutoring to try to help bring him up to grade level. Today, I am happy to report that my son was selected to attend a magnet school for the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and he is doing very well there and his needs are met without any additional cost to our family. His teachers have come up with a comprehensive plan for reading which will bring him from where he is to grade level.

My experiences with the magnet school have shown me that they recognize the unique skills that children bring. For example, when I found out that my son's drawing was picked to represent the entire 1<sup>st</sup> grade at his school. Although my son came to the magnet school with outstanding math skills his reading and writing skills have tremendously improved since his attendance there. My 4 year old daughter is learning to recognize letters. I was reading the Frozen Disney book and she pointed to the letter "G" and said the phonic sound of the letter "G". I attribute much of my children's educational accomplishments and progress to the teaching methods, staff commitment and the general high expectations for student progress held by personnel at the magnet school.

In order to be successful in America an individual needs a strong education. The magnet schools approach has changed my children's lives in that they now realize the importance of good citizenship, hard work and responsibility for each other. They are not only learning how to read, write and math but they are also learning good principles so they can become good leaders for the next generation.

I want to ensure the following for the children in the Connecticut:

- 1) That the current magnet school programs have adequate funding each year to sustain the existing programs and to allow children to attend a school that has a diverse environment.

- 2) That anyone who wants the opportunity to send their child to a magnet school has that ability.
- 3) That anyone who wants their child to attend a Pre-K program should have that ability. People should not have to pay because if the US wants to regain the reputation of having stellar education we as a country need to make sure our kids are prepared which starts with everyone having universal early childhood education.

Every parent wants the best for their child. Also, every parent will search and find opportunities that will help to ensure that their child is a successful contributing adult to society.

As I said earlier I feel truly blessed that my kids have the opportunity to attend a diverse environment with a stellar education program. Please continue to support magnet schools.

The children are our future and let's not fail them.

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