

Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing  
March 3rd, 2015  
Testimony Submitted by Jody Warrick of Windsor, CT

Good Evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee. My name is Jody Warrick and I have a 10 year old daughter Sydney. She is currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at The CREC Museum Academy. My daughter has attended Museum Academy since its inception when she entered pre-k at 4 years old. Prior to that my daughter was attending a daycare where the ratio was 1-4 (1 teacher to 4 students) with the change to pre-k it was a ratio of 2-24. This was an environment that my daughter was neither used to or was equipped to handle. What proceeded to occur was meltdowns, climbing on furniture and acting like animals. I had no idea what was going on with my child as none of this was happening at home. With the help of her teacher (Mrs. Cyr) and the special education teacher (Mrs. McDonald) I got her evaluated privately and by the Hartford board of education. The result was my daughter was diagnosed with ADHD with and underlying anxiety disorder which needed to be controlled before more testing and observations could be done. After this was done the result was that my daughter is on the Autism spectrum, (highly functioning Asperger's syndrome). I have to say that if my daughter did not start pre-k at 4 years old it would have been another year before she would have been diagnosed. Many people cannot believe that she was diagnosed at 4, but I am blessed that she was as early intervention and teamwork has been the correct combination to my daughter's success.

I cannot say enough about the staff at Museum Academy and the Windsor board of education. Together we have built an extremely strong and effective team for Sydney. I look at everyone at school as family and important members of the village that it takes to raise my daughter. My daughter hit all her milestones and I thought that we were home free, but that was a false sense of security. Being a single mother with one child, I had nothing to compare to, I know that she had quirks. It was the team at Museum Academy that helped me face the diagnosis and become proactive. Everyone in the school is invested in my daughter's success, from the secretary in the office to the principle and everyone in between. They go out of their way to be responsive and proactive in her education as well as building her social skills. Windsor board of education has been an invaluable resource for my daughter. They have gone out of their way and provided additional services that they didn't have to. I attribute that to the relationship that the school and team have built with them. The entire team is always open to suggestions and questions. When it was time for her first tri-annual, I took her to be evaluated privately in addition to the evaluations that the school was performing. When I got those results and shared them with the team, they were open and happy to have an outside evaluation of Sydney. The private evaluation suggested some services and tools that were not previously suggested. They team took the information that they were given and used it as a guide to make observations and suggestions on if those additional services were needed. After conducting their own research and observations of Sydney we came back to the

table and lobbied for some of the suggested additional services (including a para-professional).

With all this being said what I want to convey to the presiding board is that I do not believe that my daughter would have made the strides that she has without our family at The Museum Academy. Do not get me wrong we have gone through some struggles, I think that anyone would go through when forming a new school. These included several moves and staff changes. Even going through all that my daughter never became a number or another face in the crowd. I know that the professionals that the school are paid for the work that they do, but I know there is not a price that can be placed on what they have given me and my daughter. When my daughter was awarded a student of the month award the entire team was there and all of us cried. That is more than providing a service or doing a job that is an investment in my daughter and my family. There are no words that can express my appreciation for all the hard work and support that I have been given.