

Testimony of Kaitlyn Wallace to the Connecticut Education Committee
March 19, 2015

Chairman Fleischmann, Chairwoman Slossberg, and members of the committee, my name is Kaitlyn Wallace. I graduated from Torrington High School last June and am currently studying at UConn Torrington. My brother Ben is a sophomore at Explorations Charter School.

I am here to share why charter schools are important to my family, and why the two-year charter moratorium in Senate Bill 1096 is bad.

I thrived in the Torrington schools, culminating in leading the band my last two years as Drum Major. Ben, however, never felt like he fit in. The atmosphere in a large school caused Ben severe anxiety. He was so miserable, my parents decided to home-school him for two years. Ben needed this time to mature. Eventually he needed more than we could provide at home.

Explorations has been the perfect fit for Ben. As he says "we all fit in because none of us fit in." Ben insists that bullying does not exist there. I had the opportunity to see what a social butterfly Ben has become when I brought in his elaborate Halloween costume. I can't believe I just used the words "social" and "Ben" in the same sentence. A few years ago, he was a recluse. The intimate environment of Explorations has allowed him to find himself again and learn what it means to have friends. Ben goes to school happy and comes home elated, with stories of jokes he told that day. This year Ben's attendance has been perfect because he doesn't wake up with stomach aches from anxiety.

Ben has been tested with a near genius IQ. This school has put him in a position to fulfill that potential. After a few very long years, I have my funny, happy-go-lucky brother back.

I know Ben isn't alone, and I wish every child had the opportunity he has. Explorations is a community driven school, and other communities with other Ben's deserve to have that opportunity for their students. The proposed charter moratorium stops that from happening, which is unfair to those families and those students.

Please support more schools like Explorations, rather than taking them away. Thank you.