

**Testimony of Alana Morrison**  
**Student, Amistad High School**  
**Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee**  
**February 16, 2016**

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Good evening, Chairwoman Bye, Chair Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding Governor Malloy's proposed budget and how it impacts me and other students at Achievement First Amistad High School.

My name is Alana Morrison and I am a senior at Achievement First Amistad High School in New Haven. I have attended Achievement First schools since 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Amistad redefined for me, the idea of what it means to be cool. Before attending Achievement First (AF), being cool was focused on clothes, being up-to-date with the latest Jordan's or who stands out the most with biggest personality (in the wrong way).

Now, cool means being academically successful, having grit and good character. Being at AF has shown me how many people lack the educational opportunities AF provides and want to take advantage of these opportunities. At Amistad High School, students want to be around others who achieve the highest GPA and support students who are trying their best to succeed. For example, classmates will stay after school with each other just to get extra help, and push others to do what is necessary to get the best grades.

At Achievement First, no one puts you in a category and tells you that you cannot achieve academic success. Instead, they push you when you want to give up, and later you are glad they did. After taking AP classes and doing well since 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I was able to take college level courses at great universities like Princeton, Colgate, and Barnard College over the summer, and experience the college level work and campus life.

I am involved in student government at Amistad High. Student government gives me the opportunity to really take part in the school, hear people's voices and bring more to the school. I feel that I have the perfect drive and skills to communicate with both the students and teachers, and get others involved. I also played on the lacrosse team. I love how AF focuses on your sportsmanship rather than just being the best player (attitude matters). The coaches and team make you understand that even if you get hurt, and lose your athletic ability, your character is what stays with you.

After Amistad H.S., my plans are to attend and receive my degree from Bowdoin College in Maine, the number four liberal arts college in the nation. I am not sure of which major I will choose yet, but I am considering communications or political science.

Public charter schools like Amistad High provide an atmosphere of learning and support which creates a space for scholars to be challenged and exceed beyond the usual expectations. Recently I spoke to my cousin who graduated from Amistad High School a couple of years ago. He is now attending Yale, and told me that because of his experience at Achievement First, he is very prepared for his courses at Yale. I really don't understand why public charter schools like mine receive \$4,000 less per student than students in traditional public schools. Can you imagine how much more can be achieved with equal funding?

I am asking the legislature to fix Connecticut's school funding system that gives less funding to schools like mine and to maintain funding in the budget proposal that allows funding for charter school grade growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of AF Amistad High School graduates and scholars.