

**Testimony of Jermaine Smith, Student, Capital Harbor Prep
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016**

Chairwoman Walker, Chairwoman Bye and respected members of the General Assembly Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about Governor Malloy's proposed budget and how it impacts me and my school, Capital Harbor Prep.

I am 14 and in the seventh grade at Capital Prep. I am not exaggerating when I say that this school has changed my life and my future. Before I came to Capital Prep, I had attended six other Bridgeport public schools. Even at a young age, it was hard for me to enjoy school. I didn't do my homework. Bottom line, I was not motivated to learn.

After a few months at Capital Prep, there was a huge change. I grew academically. I became an enthusiastic learner. Now my favorite subject is math. I like ways we are learning, I like how they challenge me with different college level tasks. Homework is now fun and exciting.

I know now that I have a bright future ahead of me. I want to go to Cal Berkeley and major in business and finance and then I want to attend Yale for my law degree.

As a ninth grader, I have a few years ahead of me at Capital Prep. My school will grow grade-by-grade each year. Next year, I'll be in tenth grade and I am so excited to be a member of Capital Prep's graduating class of 2019. However, that may not happen. If the charter grade growth funding in the state budget is not approved, I won't be able to go onto tenth grade. If that happens, I don't know what I will do. I want to continue on with my new classmates at Capital Prep—I want to take AP classes, go to prom, and walk across the graduation stage, and then enroll at a great college.

I also think it is very important that our students, who attend a public charter school, get the same state funding as other students, who attend a regular public school. Capital Prep is not worth less than any other public school and I am not worth less than other public school students. My school has shown me that doors can open and that college can be a reality. My classmates and I are depending on you to make sure that the state funding exists so that we can keep going to our school.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and for your support of Capital Prep Harbor School.