

Testimony of Donovan Tracey
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Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016

Chairwoman Bye, Chairwoman Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Donovan Tracey and I am a 4th grade teacher at Elm City College Preparatory Elementary School in New Haven.

My school is part of the Achievement First network and serves students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Our teachers and school leaders help students in the New Haven community make outstanding academic progress and build the foundation for their success in college, career and life.

The facts show public charter schools like Elm City College Prep are making a gap-closing, game-changing difference for students. Based on ConnCAN's analysis of the most recent SBAC test results, our Elm City Charter scored among the top 5 districts across the state for performance among key student subgroups, specifically African-Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and low-income students. Notably, 83 percent of the students in our New Haven charters (Amistad and Elm City) qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and 16 percent are English Language Learners. These numbers exceed the percentage of students who meet this criteria and attend traditional public schools in New Haven.

As a teacher of color in New Haven, I understand the importance of having options for a high-quality education, whether magnet schools, traditional public schools, or public charter schools. The stakes for my students are high, and I have first-hand knowledge of their potential and promise. I also know that Achievement First parents are committed to the success of their children and want to be partners with the school to ensure that high-quality options like Achievement First remain viable over the long-term.

One of the challenges is that public charter school students like my fourth graders receive less funding than other public school students in Connecticut. On average, public charter school students receive \$4,000 less per pupil in public funds than other students who attend traditional public schools. Over time, that gap has widened.

To prevent the gap from becoming even wider, we need to chart a new course to change permanently the way our state funds its public schools, so all of Connecticut's children are treated fairly and equitably. Every day, the cost for our students to be college- and career-ready increases. The existing funding disparity makes it difficult for public charter schools to provide students with the adequate resources that are essential to their learning experiences. Our students are not worth less, so they should be funded fairly and equitably.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to testify before your committee this evening. I hope that you will continue working to build a brighter future for all of Connecticut's children.