

**Testimony of Blake Hamilton, Student, Noah Webster  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Blake Hamilton. I am a student at Noah Webster MicroSociety School.

I am here tonight to advocate for Hartford students like me who have a chance to attend a great public school. Not all Hartford public school students have been as lucky as me.

My classes at Noah Webster are preparing me for high school and beyond. Noah Webster has given me the opportunity to realize my full potential, from serving as my school's president to representing its mission as a Noah Webster Ambassador and as a Hartford Youth Scholar.

Noah Webster and Hartford Youth Scholars have helped me build my academic and leadership skills. Every day, I'm learning how to become a better student, a better leader, and a better person. These are opportunities I would never have received at my local district school.

My school changed my life, and I'm not the only person whose life has changed because of Noah Webster. Some of my friends constantly got in trouble when they were younger, but since starting classes at Noah Webster they've turned things around. Our teachers are always telling us we're full of potential, and always emphasize important it is that we stay on the path to success.

I have a younger brother and sister, they're here with me today. I want them to have the opportunities I've had, and I want them to have the chance to attend a great school like Noah Webster. If my brother and sister are able to attend a high quality public school, I'm certain that they will have bright and unlimited futures. That school could be Noah Webster, another magnet school, or maybe a public charter school.

I have access to everything I need in my school and I am so grateful. But I recently learned that is because of the way magnets are funded, they have access to additional resources not granted to all kinds of public schools. **In particular, students in public charter schools receive \$4,000 less every year than traditional public school students.** I don't think that we should fund public school students differently depending on the type of school they attend, it isn't fair.

I don't know where I would be today without my school. Every student across Connecticut deserves access to a great education. I am here tonight to ask for your support of students like me that want to attend the best possible public school, **and to ask you to fund every student equally.**

Thank you.