

**Testimony of Aisha Gutierrez, Parent, Bridgeport Public Schools
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee
February 16, 2016**

My name is Aisha Gutierrez, and I am a Bridgeport parent.

I have four children, and they currently attend four different schools -- Capital Prep, Curiale Elementary, Columbus Elementary and Park City Magnet. I would have chosen to enroll my children at Longfellow Elementary, but once the school was demolished that wasn't possible.

I am here today because Bridgeport's school system is in crisis. One in three schools is not performing, and these schools are failing to set our children on the path to achieving their goals.

Every child deserves to attend a great school, with teachers who nurture and encourage them and an administration that provides them with the resources they need.

In Bridgeport, our children are denied this opportunity year after year. Too many public schools are forgotten by the state, and nearly all of the students at these schools aren't properly taught how to read, write, or solve simple math problems.

I have a lot to be grateful for -- my children attend, and have attended, some great schools. Thanks to these schools, my oldest son has become more engaged in his studies and more involved in our family, and my teenage daughter's extracurricular activities have improved her self-control.

Every child in Bridgeport, and every child across Connecticut, deserves this chance to learn and grow. Our current public school system is inadequate, but we have the power to change the status quo.

As parents and advocates, we're asking our state leaders to step up and expand access to great schools, like high-quality public charter schools, for every child.

We need to do more to encourage good public charter schools to educate Connecticut children. Unfortunately, due to an unfair funding system that gives public charters \$4,000 less per student per year, it's hard for public charter schools to serve more and more students. And without great schools our children won't have a fighting chance at achieving their dreams. Connecticut's communities need to unite and work together to make success attainable for every child.

Thank you.