

**Testimony of Wanda Simmons, Parent, Capital Harbor Prep  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016**

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight.

My name is Wanda Simmons. I am a parent of a 15 year old sophomore student at Capital Harbor Prep in Bridgeport. Gabrielle has special challenges of her own that were negatively addressed when she was a student in the Milford School District. Upon hearing about the opening of a new charter school in Bridgeport, I inquired about the process of enrolling my child. Navigating the current policy and resources for students with special needs is an all consuming process. It is my belief that Gabrielle has not received the resources she needs to excel in her current educational studies because of inequitable public charter school funding.

I believe the education our children receive at a young age will serves as the catalyst for the rest of their lives. In Connecticut, the current district school system is depriving children of these essential skills.

Every community should offer families great public schools, whether these schools are traditional district schools or public charter schools. If district schools are unable to meet a student's needs, parents should have the option to enroll their sons and daughters in high-quality alternatives like public charter schools. And those schools should be funded equitably.

Unfortunately, public charter schools receive insufficient state funding year after year. Connecticut is limiting our options and our children's futures threaten to grow dimmer and dimmer as a result.

Our children need to feel valued at school, and they need to feel like their lives matter. Concerned parents are making our voices heard, and we're not going to stop until Connecticut can ensure us that all of our children are receiving a great education.

Thank you.