



Education Committee Testimony

Jeremiah Grace, Connecticut state director, Northeast Charter Schools Network

February 24, 2016

H.B. No. 5304 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg and esteemed members of the Education Committee, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to read my testimony. I am writing to discuss an issue that creates significant challenges for Connecticut public charter school principals, teachers, students, and families – a lack of facilities funding.

Unlike other public schools, state charter schools are not entitled to local funding for facilities and struggle to fund suitable buildings to house their schools. The General Assembly has twice attempted to rectify that inequity by allocating \$10 million both in 2005 and 2007 for competitive grants toward public charter schools facilities, but since then the number of students enrolled in public charter schools has grown by over 200%.^{1 2} That growth would not have been possible without facilities grants, and the growth approved for a number of existing charters will not be possible without similar state support. But unfortunately, the \$5 million currently remaining in the charter school facilities fund was proposed as a potential de-authorization by the Governor.

The lack of consistent, adequate facilities funding for public charter schools is compounded by the fact that charters are chronically underfunded and received \$3,896 less per-pupil in public operating dollars in fiscal year 2014.³ That disparity and the lack of facilities and local support forces many of our schools to allocate their scarce per pupil dollars to facilities funding, leaving fewer resources for classroom programs.

As things stand, public charter school students in Connecticut are not being treated fairly. Those children need and deserve need facilities support for their schools, so that they can continue to receive the public education they and their families have chosen. We thank you for the amazing work that you do on behalf of all Connecticut children and urge you to find a way to offer ensure charter students have the same support as other public school students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Connecticut State Department of Education Biennial Report on the Operation of Charter Schools in Connecticut, 2014

² Connecticut State Department of Education: The Condition of Education in Connecticut 2010-2011 School Year

³ State Department of Education: 2013 & 2014 EDOO1c