Hi, my name is Rishona Buckley and I am a freshman at Achievement First Hartford High School. I want to thank you all for allowing me to speak to you today about why I feel it's important that scholars like me and my friends get the funding we need to have a well-rounded school experience.

Achievement First Hartford High is filled with some of the hardest working students in our state. Students who look just like me, live near me, and who I call friends. We all have big dreams and are pushed every day, both academically and socially, to be the very best we can be. There are so many students at AF making the dean’s list every quarter and, in fact, I am proud to say my school was rated the #3 high school in the entire state last year. That’s because we have teachers who love us and know what we are capable of.

Yet we still receive far less funding than other public schools. Why is this the case? Why are we not valued in the same way as other students at other public schools? This is not fair and it is not the level playing field we deserve.

I am sure that there is no one in this room who doesn’t want all kids, especially brown and black kids like me, to have everything we need to get to and through college. So I ask you please to raise our funding so that it is equal to all other public schools and meets the needs of all the students who work so hard at my school every day.

I thank you for keeping this in mind, as you work to help ALL kids in CT succeed Thank you for your time.