

**Dr. Charlene Reid**  
**Appropriations Committee Public Budget Hearing**  
**Hartford, CT**  
**February 21, 2017**

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Good afternoon members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Dr. Charlene Reid and I am the Executive Director of Stamford Charter School for Excellence.

Stamford Excellence is a new and vibrant educational family in the West Side of Stamford, and is modeled after its sister school, the National Blue Ribbon Award winning Bronx Charter School for Excellence. In 2015, we earned our charter, and in that time, we've seen our PreK through second graders excel and thrive. We currently serve over 220 scholars in our rigorous college preparatory program, and next year we intend to serve, nurture, and support 280 scholars in our school.

Yet after two short years, our school and our families are facing unfairness, inequity, and cruelty due to the absence of equitable funding for our families to continue to the next grades in their community school of choice.

All of these families need your commitment to honor their right for school choice. Our families should not have to worry if they must find a new school for their rising third grader. It is unconscionable to strip away the Stamford Excellence dream from families at this stage.

The current system in which Stamford Excellence families must annually self advocate and fight for their existence is simply wrong. No other public school requires their families to continually justify their right to a high quality

education.

Stamford Excellence families, scholars, and educators have upheld their commitments to the charter we earned two years ago. We've taught scholars as young as 4 years old to read. Our scholars are excelling in the Singapore math curriculum. Our parent association has raised thousands of dollars and 20% of our families have engaged in advocacy in this very building. The Stamford Excellence community did our part. It's now your turn to fulfill your end of the bargain.

Furthermore, a continued investment into our scholars is also a continued investment into our local community. Our school has a lease with a major Connecticut not-for-profit and we are currently working on renovating a previously shuttered property in a depressed area. We have already invested millions of dollars in to the local economy by working with local suppliers, contractors, architects, and laborers. But unfortunately, the uncertainty of whether we're included in the budget makes it significantly harder to secure creative funding sources.

Let's not forget that it is also in the State of Connecticut's and the City of Stamford's best interest to invest in a model that has seen Blue Ribbon success in our sister school. This relationship between the State and Stamford Excellence is one of synergy, cohesion, and collaboration. I respectfully ask that you refrain from destroying our partnership.

You, the Appropriation Committee are experts in financial planning. And you recognize the importance of creating and adhering to a budget. But the future of our school, and its' unsettling absence from the state's budget, wreaks havoc with *our* ability to remain fiscally responsible.

I'm asking that you quickly affirm your commitments to our Stamford Excellence community so that we may continue doing what we do best; empowering families through education.

Stamford Excellence has earned the right to no longer be burdened every year with the fear. Our families like all other public school families should be able to look forward to a continuous, high-performing elementary experience. Our commitment to preparing young people for their future starts with upholding our current promises to them today.

Please join us in our educational journey. Thank you.