

ANDY STERNLIEB

Appropriations Committee Public Budget Hearing

Hartford, CT

February 21, 2017

Good afternoon members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Andy Sternlieb and I am the Chairman of the Board of Brass City Charter School in Waterbury.

I am here this afternoon to share my concerns, and those of my Board, over the notable absence of schools of choice from the equitable and fair funding provisions in the Governor's proposed budget.

The only way to guarantee fair and equitable treatment for all of our state's public school students, and charter schools are public schools, is to include all public schools -- including charter schools and other schools of choice -- in the funding formula.

Right now, in Connecticut, there are hundreds of kids and families who anticipate having a spot at the charter school of their choice next year. Whether they're planning to go onto the next grade, or if they're one of the thousands of kids hoping to land a spot and get off of charter waitlists, these kids are depending on you to support that choice.

But as-is, the proposed budget does not include sufficient funding for the number of seats that the state has authorized for our 24 charter schools. This will force these kids to leave the schools they love – that is just not fair.

At my school, Brass City Charter School, the Governor’s proposed budget would restrict funding to our school such that we wouldn’t be able to add any grades past our current 4th grade. [This is unfathomable to our families and kids!](#)

Our charter with the state is a contract between the state on one side, and our school, our families and our students on the other side. In return for accountability and performance on our part, the state agreed to allow us to serve students in grades pre-K through 8th and to financially support our school, albeit at a significantly lower rate than traditional public schools.

In the spring of 2016, our third graders had the highest scores on the SBACs in the state, exceeding every other charter school, exceeding every urban school, and exceeding virtually every wealthy suburban school in the state.

[We have delivered on our end of the bargain: the bargain we made with the state; the bargain we made with our families and students.](#)

We are also in the process of acquiring the property we currently lease and planning for an extensive multi-million dollar renovation. Without the revenue from the grade growth anticipated in our charter, we will not be able to secure the financing, from private sources, necessary to complete

this project. This is not conjecture, but direct feedback from our lenders.

Why would you even consider not funding grade growth for charters?

While it's not fair, we're a bargain! We cost the state, in terms of per pupil funding, at least \$4,000 per student less than what the state spends on students going to traditional public schools. And that excludes capital costs for facilities, which we are undertaking on our own.

Therefore, the budget as it is currently written cannot and should not pass! I urge you to invest in schools that are working.

Our families deserve to know that no matter what type of public school they choose for their child, you will fund that choice fairly and equitably.

And our kids need and deserve a budget that, at a minimum, funds our charter school's ability to grow and provides sufficient and equitable annual funding so that we can fulfill our mission and *enable our kids to soar academically, develop as people of character, and lead meaningful and productive lives both for themselves and for their community.*

Thank you for your time, for your thoughtfulness, and for your service to this great state.