

Jeremiah Grace
Hearing on Proposed S.B. 2
Hartford, CT
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Good morning. I am Jeremiah Grace, the Connecticut State Director of the Northeast Charter Schools Network. We are the charter school association for Connecticut and New York.

I am here today because our state is in a crisis when it comes to education, and the bill we have before had the potential to allay that crisis. But I am disheartened that in its current form, this bill -- which could be historic for Connecticut -- leaves out more than nine thousand public school children attending charter schools.

While I'm sure we can all agree that education is the great equalizer, sadly in Connecticut we have one of the *worst achievement and opportunity gaps in the country*. And charters are doing great work to shrink that gap, even with thousands less per child per year in public support.

Simply put, Connecticut treats children differently if they decide to choose another option. If a child chooses a charter school, Connecticut funds their education on average at \$4,000 less than if they'd remained at a district school.

If we're serious about creating a solution that benefits all public school children, then charter school children **must** be included. Some of the state's most underserved kids are relying us and we cannot let them down.

For the past four sessions, I have heard a great deal of anti-charter rhetoric in this building. There are many who strongly support the status quo. The same status quo that has created the very achievement gap we are discussing right now.

That same status quo has yet to propose any new techniques to address this gap.

On the other hand, charter schools -- ***for 20 years in our state*** -- have been answering the call to give kids in the lowest performing districts an opportunity to be educated. We must create solutions that help all children, while investing in schools and ideas that are working.

We were excited to hear the details of Senator Bob Duff's proposed S.B. 2, and believed it was a step in the right direction -- that was until we realized an entire segment of public school children are being left out of a statewide funding solution.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we fix *all* public schools, especially how we fund them.

Public charter schools are part of the solution. We deserve to be treated like it.

Thank You.