

TESTIMONY OF NIKKI NASH  
HIGHVILLE CHARTER SCHOOL

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
MARCH 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

Honorable Co-Chairs Walker and Bye, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Nikki Nash, and I am the Associate Director of the Highville Charter School. Currently we are located in Hamden, but we are re-locating to the City of New Haven in order to best serve the majority of our families who are from Newhallville. We are extremely excited about this move. We are transitioning from a leased property to a location that is near-perfect. The best part is we have negotiated an agreement to purchase the property, something that many charter schools are never able to do.

Finding and securing an appropriate school facility is the single largest challenge for many charter school operators. We must make all ends meet on our per-pupil funding, and whatever state funded grants or bonds we're lucky enough to secure when they are available. Facilities funding sources are few and far between, so most of us are depending on our per-pupil allocation to do it all – academics, operations, staff, and facilities must all come out of our \$11,000 per child.

We are lucky to be able to purchase this new site because it brings us closer to two-thirds of our families. It is a place we can call our own forever, without the uncertainty that can accompany a rental. It has enough space for us to serve all our students at full capacity. In short, it provides us stability, something desperately important to our families and our staff. This makes it a dream come true.

But I respectfully ask you to consider that we need more help to ensure that we can keep living this dream. Our per-pupil funding was flat for years, and after a modest increase up to \$11,000 per student, we are again facing flat funding. Our costs keep going up – insurance rates and supplies, for example, are rarely static. We are doing great things for children with what resources we do have, but our funding from the state needs to increase. Whether the form is more funding in facilities grants and bonds or more in the per-pupil allocation, please remember that making this investment is the right thing for our kids.

Please help us ensure that dreams really do come true not just for our current students, but for all the current and future charter school families in New Haven and across Connecticut.