

Gwen Petti, Common Ground Charter School Parent Education Committee Testimony, S.B. 1096

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Gwen Petti, and I'm the proud parent of a soon to be graduating senior and freshman at Common Ground High School in New Haven.

Our family was first introduced to Common Ground through a summer program that my son attended there. Though he was only there for the summer, he was able to get a good feel for the school and wanted nothing more than to attend Common Ground for high school. When that time came I looked into other schools in our district but nothing seemed to move us and my son decided that Common Ground was the place for him.

We have been so glad that he made that choice. He is excelling and is currently at the top of his class. As a volunteer parent liaison, I am privileged to see a lot of learning going on during the school day. I see that the teachers at Common Ground really care and get to know all of their students well. Nothing slips by them and they work together and with the administration to make sure all of their students succeed. Common Ground, to me, feels like a caring family of teachers, administrators, students, and parents.

When he started at Common Ground, my son struggled a bit with writing, so his teachers provided extra help. Because of their commitment to their students, my son was challenged to perform and it has helped him so much. Thanks to the school, he was accepted into a competitive program offered by the University of New Haven where he is currently taking a full college course load while meeting his senior graduation requirements. Common Ground is a school that goes the extra mile to help all their students achieve to their highest potential. We love the school so much that we enrolled our daughter there also this year and she is thriving.

When I think about what a moratorium would mean for the parents and students of Connecticut, I feel frustrated and disappointed. I don't think it's a fair step to take because parents need school choice. For some parents, their district school just doesn't fit their child's needs. It didn't fit ours. Charters fill a very necessary need in the community for parents to have options for their children. It doesn't benefit anyone to place a moratorium on new charter schools thereby effectively limiting those options.

We all know that education should not be a one size fits all proposition and that children learn in many different ways. Any parent will tell you that no two kids are alike. Some do not learn well in traditional learning environments and others do. There are several parents I know that have one child in a charter and one in a district school and both are thriving in these different settings. Isn't that what we're all after, for kids to thrive and learn? I don't understand why it has to be an "us vs them" approach. We need to protect school choice for parents and students alike. What charters offer us is another option in education and we need that variety and choice to help our children succeed.

I urge this committee to reconsider the proposition of a moratorium on new charters for the sake of all of our States' children. Parents and students deserve educational choice!