

Testimony of Lisa Fair
Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Education Committee
March 19, 2015

Greetings Chairman Fleischmann, Chairwoman Slossberg, and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of public charter school students and families.

My name is Lisa Fair, and I am the proud mother of two Achievement First scholars in Hartford. I have a 10th grader at AF Hartford High School and a fifth-grader at AF Summit Middle School. I myself graduated from Hartford Public Schools, and I attended middle school in the same building that is now home to AF Summit.

I'm here because I am strong opposed to Senate Bill 1096. The proposed moratorium on new charter schools in this bill doesn't make sense and is just unfair. Too many kids are sitting on waiting lists, unable to get into great schools of their choice.

I know from first-hand experience. I tried to get my daughter into a great magnet school again and again, but we couldn't get off the wait list. Every time we applied, she never got in. Sometimes she was number 500 on one waitlist and number 1,000 on another. There are just not enough seats at these schools, especially for Hartford students.

We applied for seats at different good schools every year since my daughter entered kindergarten. And after years of trying, we finally got into Achievement First when she was in fifth grade. My son was also able to get in that year, as a kindergartener. It felt like we hit the jackpot. In one month, my son learned to read and my daughter is doing great as well. These schools have truly worked for my family, and so many other families.

I kept trying to get my kids into great schools because, like all parents, I know education makes all the difference in the world. I want both of my kids to be able to compete with students from districts across Connecticut and internationally and go on to great colleges and careers.

Unfortunately, not every school in Hartford provides a great education. Too many schools are not on the level that they should be, and it is so hard to get off waitlists at the best schools.

That's why we need you, our legislators, to vote against the charter moratorium bill, because if this bill passes, many children will suffer. Charter schools are helping my kids and so many other kids in Hartford. Since you have to live in Hartford to go to these high-quality charter schools, they give our students a better chance, especially when students from lots of surrounding towns—towns where they already have great schools—are competing for seats at our magnet schools.

Please vote against this bill. All kids deserve an equal opportunity and a great school. There are kids growing up right now and they can't wait two more years. They need a great school now. Don't stand in the way of that possibility. Thank you for your time.