

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>

SUBMITTED BY MEGIN MEYER

Co-Chairs Fleishmann and Slossberg, and Honorable Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Megin Meyer, and I am the Director of the Hudson Country Montessori School in Danbury. Our school is a vibrant example of the Montessori model of education. We believe that every child deserves a common core education in a fully differentiated environment that accepts that all children learn things at different rates at different times and through different modalities.

Our school was originally founded nearly 45 years ago and since that time we've made it our goal to provide a stellar academic and social program to students at an affordable tuition rate. We do this because we fundamentally believe that good schools – and the education good schools provide – should not be out of reach for families.

Sadly, in Danbury, it often feels like getting a free and appropriate educational experience is out of reach for the typical Danbury family. As an Alliance district we know our public schools are among those that have struggled the most primarily because of the diversity in our population. Many families are waiting right now for an alternative in education that will mitigate cultural differences while providing a rigorous common core education.

For these reasons, it is our dream to create a public charter school in Danbury. Getting a charter school up and running in our city, which currently does not have any other charter schools, would allow us to bring the Montessori model to the families that cannot afford even our modest tuition.

This dream may never be a reality for us or for those families if SB 1096 becomes law. A two-year moratorium on new charter growth would prevent us from continuing to develop our plans for a new public charter school. And it would do more than simply halt the immediate creation of new schools – It would effectively tell groups like ours that there is no sense in continuing to dream about a free Montessori school for Danbury's children.

Passing a two year moratorium signals to all of us loudly and clearly that family choice in education, and developing new models that can help children now – not years from now – is only for the wealthy residents of Danbury and no longer a part of our approach

to finding solutions for students that are not well served by the methods of traditional education.

Let me be clear: We have a very good relationship with the Danbury public school system and high regard for their extraordinary success in customizing a one-size-fits-all traditional education system so that it works for a broad diversity of children. But, the truth is, while most of Danbury public school system children are well served by traditional methods of education, there are many children with an astonishing variety of special needs that are not well served by the traditional education model. I believe that passionate people, pioneers in Charter education will find ways to inspire these underserved children to a greater purpose in life.

I hope the Education Committee will think carefully before placing a moratorium on the charter school community. A moratorium on new schools places a limit on our progress. It stifles innovation and discourages well-meaning educators from helping children now.

There are no schools in Danbury that offer a program like we would. At a Montessori school, children learn by doing, by trying; by failing; by trying again and ultimately succeeding - just like you, and me and every adult in the real world learns new things, our students are learning the habits for success in life. In fact, at the higher levels we really don't even teach our students; what we do is challenge them with thousands of questions that inspire passion, reflective thinking, creativity and out of the box thinking necessary for high school, college and higher paying jobs. As Dr. Montessori wrote so many years ago, we believe that a child with self-confidence and a love for learning can accomplish anything. And since standardized tests are currently the only standard of achievement in education, I can stand before you with confidence and tell you that our students do every bit as well on standardized tests as traditional education students.

I respectfully ask that you do not move forward with the proposed charter school moratorium in SB 1096. Please do not take away our opportunity to bring the Montessori approach to more of Danbury's children.