

**Connecticut State Board of Education Meeting**

**February 14, 2018**

**Testimony of Donald E. Williams, Jr., Executive Director, Connecticut Education Association**

Good morning members of the State Board of Education. I'm Donald Williams, executive director of the Connecticut Education Association.

In this time of fiscal challenge, there are four reasons why it makes no sense to spend \$627,000 to reward charter schools for ignoring their enrollment limits.

First, there are much greater needs. ECS dollars have been slashed. Schools have cut programs and services for students. The TEAM program—which is critical for new teacher training and retention—lost all funding. Every legislative leader is on the record saying these cuts were not intended by the legislature.

Second, there is no legislative requirement to fund slots that break the enrollment cap, and no directive to do so in the state budget. Senator Looney's letter does not require that this board take action. This is a decision that is solely within your discretion.

Third, the three charter schools making this request all ignored their enrollment limits. Just seven months ago, the department and the charters confirmed their enrollment projections for this year. This board allocated an additional 504 slots at a cost of \$5.54 million dollars. Now, in the same school year, the State Board of Education is being asked to be a rubber stamp and an ATM machine for those in the charter school industry who do not follow the rules.

Fourth, there has been no examination of the finances of these schools. For example, in the last school year, Capitol Prep Harbor did not spend \$331,000 of its grant from the state and carried over \$275,000. They could likely absorb their unapproved expansion without any additional dollars from the state.

Elm City Prep has a balance of \$3.5 million in outside revenue on hand, and last year paid a management fee of \$992,645 to Achievement First—dollars that did not go to the education of their students. It does not make sense for the board to send another \$220,000 to Elm City Prep.

Please consider what message your action today will send to the charter schools that do play by the rules, and spend their money on their students instead of huge management fees.

Remember that as our traditional public schools struggle with budget cuts, they also have accepted thousands of students in need from Puerto Rico, and have not received one dime in additional state educational funding.

The \$627,000 dollars requested for the unapproved expansion should be redirected towards TEAM and the critical programs that affect many thousands of students across Connecticut.

Thank you.