

Testimony of
Kristen Basiaga
Glastonbury Educator
Before the
Education Committee

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My name is Kristen Basiaga. I'm a high school physics teacher, mother of three, and the President of the Glastonbury Education Association. I testify today in opposition to SB 1096. I am lucky to teach and lead in a district where education funding is guaranteed. Parents in Glastonbury largely send their children to successful, neighborhood schools that prepare their students for college, career, and life. I'm fortunate to live in a district where my kids don't have to worry about high teacher turnover, rotating administrators, and questionable adherence to 504/special education laws. In short, my districts aren't worried about encroaching charter schools.

However, for-profit charter schools don't target districts like mine. They target districts with large numbers of students of color and working class parents. Charter schools leech funding from the existing public school structures, redistributing money from the students who need it most.

What do those students get in return? Harsh and punitive disciplinary systems in 'no excuses' charter schools punish students for laughing, humming, not making eye contact, and draconian dress codes (<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-the-harsh-discipline-of-no-excuses-charter-schools-is-it-worth-the-promise/2019/06>). Inexperienced teachers with attrition rates of 40% for first year teachers and an average of 130% more turnover than public schools (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED543582.pdf>). Curriculum that isn't overseen by school boards, just implemented by whatever administrator rotates in for the job. Students with disabilities or special education needs are often pushed back to their home district's public schools. Charter schools don't have the responsibility to educate all students. Parents are sold the idea that charter schools will help their kids - but they're being sold a false promise. And it's the students who suffer for it.

And what do teachers get from working at charter schools? Most charter schools don't have teacher's unions to protect their working conditions. Employment at a charter school is on an at-will basis, so teachers don't have any semblance of job security. Charter schools claim to pay

their teachers a higher average salary- but most teachers don't get to higher steps on the salary schedule because of their extremely high turnover.

As legislators, you don't just protect students like mine in Glastonbury or children like mine in Cromwell. These charter schools don't provide true opportunities for students of color in Hartford or Bloomfield. They drain money from our community schools, taking away from students, parents, and educators that deserve better. Please do not support SB 1096. Best, --
Kristen Basiaga

Thank you for your time and consideration.

