



## State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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MEMBER  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

March 8, 2024

Dear Senators McCrory and Berthel, Representatives Felipe and McCarty,

Thank you for your leadership on the Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee. I am writing to follow up on my requested bill proposal **H.B. 5060: An Act Concerning Funding for Danbury Charter School**.

As you are aware, Danbury's charter was approved in 2018 along with Norwalk's after the same rigorous process that all other large cities have opened their charters. In the current biennium budget, Norwalk will receive \$2.4M for its **second** charter school and New Haven will receive about \$1.2M for its **seventh** charter school, but Danbury did not receive any funding to open its first. **Danbury remains the only large city in Connecticut without a charter school.**

My request of \$1.375M is based on the \$12,500 per student amount that Norwalk and New Haven were allocated their funding in FY25. I did not factor in the initial \$300,000 allocated to each of those schools in FY24. When asked what the cost would be for first-year expenses to fund the Danbury charter school, the SDE based their cost projections on the 2023-24 State Charter School average per pupil amount of \$12,615 for a total projected grant amount of \$1,387,650.

The years-long struggle to open a charter school to disadvantaged students has left our Danbury community bruised. The brave residents who have stood in the face of hateful opposition have endured false and derogatory claims about their character and intentions. They have been continually ignored and defied by those who are supposed to represent and protect them, but who have chosen to represent and protect a different set of individuals, many of whom live a quite different life outside of Danbury. Yet, our community has persevered, because our children are worth the fight.

Danbury is home to the largest high school in the state of nearly 4,000 students. Within the past decade, Danbury High School's total population increased by almost 25%, including a rapid rise in the number of Latino students who make up the majority of our student body at 59% and Multilingual Learners at 34.5%. District-wide, over half of all our students are from low-income households. As you well know, an Alliance District is one of the lowest performing districts in the state and all the more reason we need to expand educational opportunities that are better suited to certain students' needs. Statistics prove that a one-size does not fit all.

Families of students who would be better served in a smaller environment cannot afford a high-cost alternative, such as private school or to look beyond city borders.

The charter school could have opened in the fall of 2019, and if opened back then, would today be serving 550 students in our downtown area. That would have alleviated the need for the Board of Education to purchase temporary tents to be able to serve lunch at the High School to all students next year. Funding the Danbury Charter School is both fiscally responsible and morally sound.

**I am requesting that the Danbury Charter School be included in your recommendations to the Co-Chairs and Ranking Members of the Appropriations Committee and ultimately included in the Appropriations Committee proposed budget.**

During the 2018 approval process, at multiple opportunities, community stakeholders showed overwhelming support and need for a charter school. I implore you to support the families who have come before the legislature year after year since then to advocate for this option and for the opportunity to choose what is best for their children. Please do not allow one or two people to decide against the majority of the will of the people. Providing this choice will not only help our youth toward a brighter future, but will right the wrongs of an unjust process and set our community on a path of healing. Ultimately, this is all about kids, to move the needle of academic success, and make a difference in the lives of children.

If you would like to further discuss, please feel free to contact me. Again, thank you for your leadership and thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Rachel Chaleski  
State Representative  
138<sup>th</sup> Assembly District