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## HARTFORD COMMUNITY TO LEGISLATURE: "SAVE OUR SCHOOLS"

*Achievement First Hartford High School Parents, Students & Educators Urge State Legislators to Preserve Charter School Funding for their School & Schools Across the State*

*The Future of AF Hartford High Students Hangs in the Balance*



(HARTFORD, CT) – Parents, students, teachers and administrators of Achievement First Hartford High School, today delivered a simple message to state legislators – “Save Our Schools.”

AF Hartford High, a high-performing public charter school currently serving students in grades 9-11, will not be able to offer 12<sup>th</sup> grade next year if state legislators do not preserve grade-growth funding for public charter schools as proposed in Gov. Dannel Malloy’s budget.

“Legislators need to fund grade growth so that our juniors can concentrate on SATs and summer enrichment programs and visiting colleges, rather than stressing over whether they will have a place to go to school next year,” said **Jane Cravedi, a parent with a child at AF Hartford High**. “I am urging our legislators, do the right thing by all of these scholars and continue to fund grade growth. Save our schools.”

Several charter schools across the state face a similar situation, including AF Summit Middle (also in Hartford), where students can only matriculate to the next grade if the legislature supports the funding for charter grade growth in the state budget. A complete list is below.

School Name	Grades Served	Approved to serve in Fall 2015
Achievement First Hartford Academy	K-11	K-12
Booker T. Washington Academy	K-1	K-2
Brass City Charter School	PK-2	PK-3
Capital Prep Harbor School		6-12
Elm City Montessori	PK-K	PK-3
Great Oaks Charter School- Bridgeport	6	6-7
Highville Charter School	PK-10	PK-11
Jumoke Academy	PK-11	PK-12
Stamford Charter School for Excellence		PK-1

"The situation at AF Hartford High could devastate the lives of these students, who deserve to graduate from their school," said **Jeremiah Grace, who in addition to his role at NECSN is one of the spokespeople for the Coalition for Every Child.** "This system is unsustainable. Politics and withheld funding are no excuse for forcing students to leave their school – these children and families deserve better. State leaders need to follow through on commitments they've made to our children and secure grade growth funding for public charter schools across the state."

"We know that 100 percent of our graduating seniors would be accepted to college next year, said **AF Hartford High principal Emily Banks.** "It bothers me that I have to say 'would be.' I have to say it because, while I know that I am lucky to lead such an amazing school, I am here today to talk about what I don't know. I don't know if the legislature will preserve the funding we need for our 11<sup>th</sup>-graders to move on to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and become our school's first graduating class. I don't know how to ease the worries of our juniors and their families—members of our founding class who have grown with us since 9<sup>th</sup> grade—who fear that deep budget cuts will rob them of the chance to continue to learn from their favorite teachers, develop their character through their favorite sports teams and in their enrichment opportunities, and graduate with their classmates from the school they love. What I do know is this: we need our legislators to stand up for our students."

"My students have truly earned their graduation, together, at AF Hartford High," said **Abigail Dym, a teacher at AF Hartford High.** "They deserve to stand before their community of teachers, family and friends celebrating their high school career. We need legislators to fund grade growth so that our 11<sup>th</sup>-graders can indeed move on to 12th grade. We need this funding to be protected in the state budget so that our students can graduate from their great school, go on to great colleges, and return after receiving their diplomas to become leaders in our community."

"All I want is to graduate from my high school," said **AF Hartford High student Richard Hunter.** "But if our legislators don't the right thing, that won't happen."

"If the charter grade growth funding in the state budget is not approved, we won't have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade next year," said **student Kadejah Gamble.** "We deserve the chance to finish what we started. The legislature must do the right thing and save our school!"

*The Coalition For Every Child is a movement of parents, students, educators, community members, faith leaders, advocates and organizations dedicated to ensuring that each and every Connecticut student has a quality education. Stand with us and support the campaign for better schools.*

#### **About Achievement First Hartford High**

Achievement First Hartford High is a high-performing public charter school currently serving 155 Hartford students in grades 9-11. The school opened with ninth graders in August 2012, and has planned to grow each year until it becomes a full-size 9-12 high school. One-hundred percent (100%) of AF Hartford High's student body qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch. The mission of Achievement First Hartford High is to close the achievement gap by providing a college prep-school quality education that prepares Hartford students for success in college, career and life. For more information, visit [www.AchievementFirst.org](http://www.AchievementFirst.org).