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Testimony to support a more democratic Board of Education

As a teacher and parent in New Haven Public Schools, as well as President of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, I am submitting written testimony this evening in support of a more democratic Board of Education where NHPS families and voters have a real voice in the decisions that impact our children.

Public education is one of the fundamental pillars of democracy in this country. And democratic oversight and community control of our city's schools are necessities if we are to protect and support public education in the years to come. In addition, the civic engagement and civic education that come from democratic oversight and community control of our schools is a benefit to all of us who are connected to our public education system.

It is for these reasons that I believe that the Board of Education should be more democratic and representative of NHPS parents and families. And while the Charter Commission opted to not continue the work our community initiated ten years ago to make our Board of Education even more democratic, I hope they will consider the following recommendation: Ensure that two seats on the Board of Education are reserved for parents/guardians of current NHPS students.

It is true that everyone in New Haven should be invested in the ongoing success of our city's public schools. And many can serve in the capacity of Board of Education member regardless of their family's affiliation with NHPS. Nevertheless, parents and guardians must be prioritized in a more intentional capacity. Parents and guardians have specific information, experiences, and vantage points that strengthen their capacity to govern. In addition, this important shift sends a clear message from our city's government to NHPS parents and guardians that we welcome their involvement and see this involvement as crucial to our collective improvement and growth. The pandemic's impact on parent and guardian involvement in our schools has not been fully addressed and remedied. We need bold and meaningful action and this recommendation is one such example that will benefit our schools and our community.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Blatteau  
President, New Haven Federation of Teachers