

# CITY FORWARD COLLECTIVE

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **City Forward Collective mobilizes more than 200 families in support of equal funding for all Milwaukee students' education**

*CFC team helps mobilize parents to show support at state legislature budget hearing in Waukesha.*

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MILWAUKEE – City Forward Collective and a coalition of Milwaukee education advocates helped mobilize more than 200 Milwaukee parents, along with school administrators and other supporters, to attend and testify at a Wisconsin state legislature Joint Committee on Finance Public Hearing in Waukesha on Wednesday. The mobilization is part of a broader campaign to raise awareness about significant disparities in K-12 education funding for Milwaukee students, and to advocate for elected officials to close the funding gap in the next Wisconsin state budget in order to better support all students, including the 47 percent of Milwaukee school-aged children that either attend public charter schools, or that use vouchers to attend private schools that participate in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

Amid a crowd of parents wearing green t-shirts to show support, several Milwaukee school parents gave testimony to the committee in support of closing the funding gap.



During Wednesday's hearing, Paulino Ornelas provided testimony about the opportunities he received as a student at Bruce-Guadalupe School, as well as the opportunities his five children have received at St. Augustine Preparatory Academy.

"I can confidently say that switching to a charter school saved me from what statistics said I would become - involved in drugs, incarcerated, or dead, just like many of my friends in my old neighborhood now are," he said. "Now I am a mentor at my children's choice school, for kids just like me. We need a community of teachers that

care about them and want to break cycles. Charter and choice schools are literally saving lives. I respectfully ask to support providing equitable funding for all students, because my five kids' lives are worth just as much as the kids attending the school around the corner."

LaToya Woods, whose son attends Rocketship Transformation Prep, testified during Wednesday's hearing about the school's diverse and high-performing environment.

"One day when my son was in the first grade, I remember I received a text message. My son grabbed my phone and began to read what it said, word for word," she said. "I was very proud of that moment, and there were two things that I was sure of: One, I needed to add a lock to my phone. Two, that he would not be a statistic. My son is now thriving as a second grade Rocketeer. He's performing one to two levels above his grade level. I was pleased to know that I found an educational facility that met my needs for my son and my needs as a parent – and I found it within my community! I ask that you support closing the funding gap across all sectors of education in the state of Wisconsin, so that our schools can continue to close the achievement gap that has plagued our city."

Currently, students who attend Milwaukee private and charter schools receive approximately \$5,000-\$7,000 less per year in state funding to support their education than their peers in public schools receive. This funding gap results in fewer resources for students, teachers and staff at private and charter schools, and can be an obstacle for some of Milwaukee's highest-performing schools to expand and serve even more students.



Despite these challenging operating conditions, Milwaukee private and charter schools continue to perform at levels that draw in more students every year. Today, nearly half of Milwaukee students attend a charter or private school.

"Milwaukee is in the midst of an academic crisis: Only one in five students in our city is on grade level. Milwaukee's students don't face a brilliance gap – they face opportunity and resource gaps. All students have equal value, and the funding gap for Milwaukee's charter and private school students - nearly half of our city's kids - must be closed to reflect this," said Brittany

Kinser, President and Executive Director of CFC.

With equal state funding, Milwaukee's highest-performing private and charter schools would be better positioned to serve their current students -- and expand their capacity to serve even more students. This can be accomplished without taking a single dollar of funding support away from Milwaukee's public school students. The State of Wisconsin has a multi-billion-dollar budget surplus, and elected officials would need to dedicate only a small fraction of that surplus to close the gap as they plan the upcoming state budget.

### **About City Forward Collective**

City Forward Collective is a team of school leaders, educators, and passionate advocates working together to ensure every child has access to a great school. Formed in 2019, City Forward Collective is the result of a merger between two previously existing education advocacy organizations, Partners Advancing Values in Education (PAVE) and Schools That Can Milwaukee (STCM.) The organization has a

broad base of support from educators, parents, school administrators, community leaders and members of the business community.

Prior to her arrival at CFC, Kinser spent her professional life as a teacher and education leader. After teaching in Chicago and Japan, Kinser helped launch the IIT Math and Science Academy in Chicago, then joined Rocketship Public Schools and moved to Milwaukee to serve as founding principal at the network's first school outside of California.

The CFC board and staff are composed of longtime Milwaukee residents who have attended, worked in, and send their children to a wide range of Milwaukee public, private and charter schools.

