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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

During your recent testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, you highlighted the story of an East Hartford native named Michael. Being from East Hartford myself and a former public school educator, I was deeply affected by his story. No student should ever be made to feel afraid in school or question their own potential to succeed. However, the characterization in your testimony of our schools as “dangerous daycares” is contrary to what I know to be true about a district that makes heroic efforts to ensure their students don’t fall behind their peers in more affluent communities.

That is why I join Superintendent Nathan Quesnel in inviting you to East Hartford to meet our students and hear from our teachers who have had to learn to do more with less, but continue to teach because they believe in every students’ success. Connecticut is a state that has embraced the idea of choice within our public school system – rather than contrary to it. I’d be honored to show you around our local schools, including the Connecticut International Baccalaureate Academy.

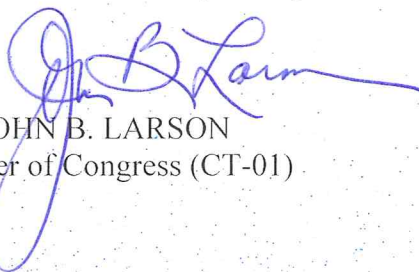
Michael’s story is a prime example of why more robust public investment in all our schools is critical. We must be a nation that builds up all our public schools to ensure students like Michael can succeed wherever they may be. But with the President’s FY2018 budget proposing to cut grant programs designed to help districts like ours close that opportunity gap,

our students will continue to be underserved. Providing \$1 billion for an untested school choice program will leave schools like those in East Hartford, who take seriously their obligation to serve all students, even further behind.

As someone deeply familiar with the challenges that our public schools face, I believe cutting \$10.6 billion (more than 13 percent) from education programs will only further limit educational opportunities for vulnerable children and deeply hurt America's economic competitiveness in years to come. Public schools represent the promise that quality K-12 education is a right for all children, not just those families with the resources to send their children to private or religious schools or those lucky enough to win a school lottery system. I hope that we can work together to ensure that our investments in education lift up all schools, rather than circumvent or divide the progress being made in East Hartford to lessen the opportunity gap that exists between communities.

I hope that you take up Superintendent Quesnel's invitation to visit East Hartford public schools, and it would be my honor to take you to lunch afterwards, at an iconic dining establishment in my town, Augie and Ray's. Please contact Linda Christiana in my Hartford Office ([linda.christina@mail.house.gov](mailto:linda.christina@mail.house.gov)) or at (860) 278-8888 for assistance in scheduling. Thank you.

Sincerely,



JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress (CT-01)