



To Our Distinguished Teaching Community in Jersey City,

I wanted to reach out directly to you to address misinformation that is being promulgated by political opponents in their effort to maintain the status quo in Jersey City. I hoped that a direct, factual letter would best clarify my positions.

Since first taking office, I have fought passionately for the public schools of Jersey City, because I believe that a working relationship between the City and schools will solve issues of employment, crime, taxes, and recreation. My admiration and support for the great work that teachers do has never, and will never change.

Regardless of what is said about me, the truth is that I have never publicly nor privately advocated for school vouchers or privatization of schools. I have a perfect record of supporting public schools and charter schools, never privatization. By contrast, Mayor Healy is a supporter of vouchers, as evidenced by the attached letter to the State Legislature in support of the Opportunity Scholarship Act (commonly known as vouchers). Regarding charter schools, my record and support is similar to that of the Mayor. Included is an article on this subject, in which the Mayor and I are both referenced as supporters, and quoted.

An area in which the Mayor and I differ, however, is our level of engagement in the school system. I have a strong record of action and accomplishment as a councilman and a schools advocate. Unfortunately, much misinformation has been spread about my relationship with the Commissioner of Education, the Governor, and State Senators. I try to work with everyone, regardless of party, because that is what my constituents expect of me. There are meetings every day among the educational leadership, whether it is the NJEA meeting with the senate or the commissioner, or in my case, a councilperson meeting those in control of the Jersey City schools.

Overall, I am very proud of my record on education, and as Mayor, education will remain my top priority, because a strong school system is paramount to the success of our entire City. If you have further concerns regarding this or any other issue, I would be happy to speak with you personally, or in a group setting.

Sincerely,

Steven Fulop

# CITY OF JERSEY CITY

JERRAMIAH T. HEALY  
MAYOR



CITY HALL  
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302  
TEL: (201) 547-5200  
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February 1, 2011

Members of the Legislature:

We write in support of the Opportunity Scholarship Act, a bill that will expand educational opportunities for children attending some of the state's lowest performing public schools.

In Jersey City, we have the state's most highly rated high school, the McNair Academic Academy, but we also have schools that have significant challenges.

Senators, we urge you to support this legislation, which will give many of our families and students an opportunity for choice.

Please vote yes to release the Opportunity Scholarship Act from Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Healy', is written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

Jerramiah T. Healy  
Mayor

## Charter School Supporters Press Jersey City to Call for Fuller State Funding of its Charters, and Jersey City Obliges

By Matt Hunger • Jan 13th, 2011 • Category: Featured, News, Politics

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Photos: Steve Gold

About 200 parents and a dozen children filled the pews in Jersey City's council chambers last night, wearing yellow shirts saying "Our Kids Are Not Worth Less," a show of support for a resolution being considered that would demand the state "create a more equitable formula" for funding urban charter schools. The resolution, which was sponsored by Ward E councilman Steven Fulop and strongly supported by the Healy administration, passed by an 8 to 0 vote, with At-Large councilwoman Willie Flood absent.



Shelley Skinner (at left), a leading local and statewide advocate for charters, said she was "very passionate" about the funding issue, which she framed not in the usual terms of charter school versus traditional public school, but in terms of the students.

"There are 3,600 kids in Jersey City who go to charter schools," said Skinner, who is the director of development and community relations of Learning Community Charter School. "These are the worst funded kids in the state of New Jersey right now."

According to figures released last week by the Healy administration, the Jersey City school district spends \$17,200 per child, but some charter schools here are receiving less than \$10,000 per student — only 50 to 60 percent of what state law requires.

"The law is very, very clear on what they're supposed to get, which is 90 percent [of the amount given to each student in traditional public schools]. At the very least they receive 80 percent, which is less than what their peers receive," Skinner said. "All these charter schools employ lots and lots of teachers and staff members. We're not asking for anything more than the law states."

While the resolution passed last night is largely symbolic, since Jersey City doesn't create the funding formula, it puts pressure on Gov. Chris Christie — who has been a vocal proponent of charters — and the state legislature to work on fixing the funding discrepancy.

Fulop, before his 'aye' vote, commended the parents of the charter schools for attending the meeting and voicing their support.

"Some council members were going to abstain or vote no," he said, but that had changed, he implied, due to the parents' efforts. "It looks like it'll be unanimous now."

Fulop said fully funding charter schools is a crucial issue for Jersey City, since it helps retain younger residents looking to start a family.

"If you look at the numbers, there is a declining enrollment in traditional public schools," he said. "Charter schools increase every year. There is a waiting list for 700 kids, and some of these parents see the lottery as a choice between staying in the city or leaving."

While the resolution did pass unanimously, Ward B councilman David Donnelly voiced concerns with insufficiency in funding for all students.

"I am going to support the resolution, but I do so with a little bit of concern about the funding mechanism for all the schools," he said. "I know it's not an 'us versus them' issue, but in these hard economic times, for the state of New Jersey and the city of Jersey City, there's only so many dollars to go around, and we need to make sure it goes to the right places. Ninety percent is what the law says, so it's what they should get. But I also worry about public schools in general."

Ten speakers, representing charter school founders, advocates, parents, and teachers spoke on behalf of the resolution. The funding difficulties were described as a "tightrope act," in part because of the additional money some charters have to spend per student, including building costs like heating and repairs. This has, according to several speakers, resulted in some charter schools being forced to renege on certain aspects of their own charters, including classroom size and sacrificing competitive teacher salaries through self-imposed salary freezes.

"The math does not work for us," Skinner said. "We have the same heating bills, the same costs [and] health care pensions. But we're doing it essentially on 35 percent of what the district is getting. So we're asking state to fix what is a structural flaw."

Ward C councilwoman Nidia Lopez pointed to experience with her own family to show her support for the charter-funding fight.

"My son is one of the great teachers who teaches at a charter school," she said before voting 'aye' on the resolution. "I really believe they do more with less."