

**Lorén M. Spears
53 Indian Cedar Drive
Charlestown, RI 02813
401-793-0485**

Dear Members of the Funding Formula Working Group,

Thank you for the time to speak with you today and for the work you are doing to ensure equity in our state.

My name is Lorén Spears and I am a parent of two Met graduates, and a current Met student. I am also the aunt and/or past teacher to 9 other youth that graduated from the Met. They represent all 6 of the Met Center's campuses. I am asking for your support of the Met, an innovative school that connects youth's interests to their learning and helps prepare them for career and college. The Met is dedicated to experiential learning and individualized education, and has helped my sons' Robin & Ridge and my daughter Laurel to be empowered learners. Your task is great to ensure equity in funding for students and learners across the state and I am confident you will ensure equity for all RI CTE schools.

The Met is important option for families and students throughout RI. It provides real world learning opportunities, small teacher to student ratios, learning through internships, opportunities to travel, visit colleges and so much more that is not always available at other schools **for all students**. It provides a diverse learning environment, civic engagement, and an inclusive environment where youth can be themselves, honor their families, cultures and communities.

(20) ^{no more} As an educator I know the barriers students face, but the Met gives them alternative strategies to succeed and reach their goals. My eldest son, Robin just married another graduate of the Met. He is currently working and going to CCRI part time and she is going to NE Tech for documentary film, a passion she developed at the Met. Through his internships, Robin worked at Tomaquag Museum studying Native arts & sciences, he has participated in OLEEP with Brown, worked with a Cuban environmental artist, and interned with an environmental police officer. These opportunities help him grow as a learner, experience various opportunities connected to his interests, and to build his leadership skills. More than anything he was able to connect to his Native American culture through his real world learning. My son Ridge had many internships and entrepreneurial projects where he utilized his creativity and engineering skills to fabricate skateboards, build small engines and other technology. These experiences are continuing into his adult life and guiding his college experience. My daughter is new to the Met but is thrilled with the opportunity to take classes at Salve, intern at an animal hospital and do project based learning. The beauty of America is the diversity, the Met allows us to have a diversity of learning & teaching styles that address the goals, needs, and passions of our youth. RI has many wonderful schools, the Met is one of them and deserves to have equitable funding.

I know the Met has given my children more than they need to be successful in the real world and I am grateful they have had the opportunity to attend the Met. **I ask that you please continue to support the Met as you review the funding formula for the approved career and technical education regulations, so that my children and future students can continue to have this opportunity.**

My story is not the only story. I have here a box of letters from parents and students who came to exhibitions of work last week and elected to write letters of support. Please review them at your leisure.

Thank you for your time & consideration.

Sincerely,

Lorén M. Spears