

Dear State Board of Education:

In 2012, I was an 8th grader trying to change his life and find a good school to go. Going to a good school was important to me because I did not want to be in the streets anymore. My 8th grade school was not the best. In fact, my guidance counselor didn't even send my high school applications to any school because it was assumed that my peers and I would just go to our district school. This meant that my only two options for high school at the time were West Side High School and Eastside High School. To me, it was a waste of my time to go to either of these schools. I wasn't about to waste my time, so I decided that I was going to drop out and start "making money" early, since this is what I planned to do once I graduated. This is when a friend, Prince O., intervened. He knew what I was planning to do, and he told me to apply to this new school, the Paulo Freire Charter School, that he had heard about and applied for. So I applied. I figured, what did I have to lose. Shortly after I submitted my application, I got accepted.

When I got to Paulo Freire in 2013, it wasn't what I expected. I was used to fighting everyday, getting kicked out of class, being able to slack, so this is what I expected to do in high school. However, the mandatory Summer Bridge Program proved me wrong, and I quickly learned that this was not going to be the case at the Paulo Freire Charter School. I have been at the Paulo Freire now for four years, and I am set to graduate from the school this June. I have not always been the best student while here, but the teachers and administrators have never given up on me and have always supported me.

This is because, at the Paulo Freire Charter School, it is not just about academics. It's also a home away from home, it's your second family. The first day of school I was accepted with open arms. All the teachers knew my name on the first day, and even the principal knew my name. Although I received a great education at the Paulo Freire Charter School, I also received love as a student. While attending the school, my mother passed away. When this happened, I was lost and didn't have a purpose. When I came back to school shortly after her death, I learned that the school had made me a poster with little messages on it. Although, my grades suffered, no one gave up on me. My friends supported me, my teachers supported me, the administrators supported me, and the other staff members at the school supported me. Because of the support that I received, my grades began to constantly rise. As a result, I will be graduating in June with over \$63,000 in scholarships. Because of the Paulo Freire Charter School I have become a changed man, and my destiny has changed. I am glad that I attended the Paulo Freire Charter School, and I do not regret anything regarding this school. All of the teachers only want to best from you, and will push you until you see that you can be and do more. It is unfortunate that other students from Newark, who may have a similar mindset as the one that I had, will not have the opportunity to attend this school and be blessed as I have.

Sincerely,
Anthony Haywood Class of 2017