

Remarks of Barbara Carpenter
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Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee & Education Committee
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Good afternoon members of the Education Committee and the Program Review and Investigations Committee. My name is Barbara Carpenter and I have been a teacher for 33 years. In 1996 I was named the teacher of the year in the West Hartford Public School System, I have been a prior member of the West Hartford Town Council and currently I am the president of the West Hartford Education Association. I'm here today to comment on Raised Bill 329 and Raised Bill 330 pertaining to the BEST program.

In 1976, the year of our nation's bicentennial, I entered the profession not only as a means to make a modest income, but also a way to help others and make a difference in the lives of children. Teaching was a highly competitive profession.

After signing my contract (\$10,200) my supervisor said that she was assigning me to work with three excellent teachers. She said "Don't worry, they will help you get started." Little did I know that these teachers provided me with an education that could not be found in even the best of educational institutions. They nurtured, guided, instructed and helped to form an identity and love for children that transcends today. It was a natural apprenticeship. My job was not only to bring the coffee but also to listen...listen to their stories and learn from their wisdom. They taught about how to communicate with parents and administration. There was no paper work, video tapes...no objective-setting, but they set a standard that transcended any standard that even BEST could set. The standard was not an external plethora of paper work, but an internal understanding of the love of teaching.

The message was clear and consistent...nothing is more important than the child...what you do before and after school has a minimal impact upon a child's life...when they enter the room you have to be 100% on...100% engaged and don't ever let anything

interfere with your relationship with the child. My mentors taught me to listen,.. laugh and always believe that your children will learn...because they love you. In all my years of using this approach, never one of them let me down. The process was informal, but it worked, and some of the best teachers came from this era. These were your teachers.

One of the greatest tributes to a parent is when they adopt your profession. Today both of my daughters are kindergarten teachers in Hartford.....they saw how much their mom loved their job. Every morning I say to them "Make a difference in just one child's life...think about who it might be today." Maybe they have the time to think about what is important...but not when paperwork...videotaping... objective writing ...and logs keep them distracted from the most important work of the day - teaching children. Will the BEST program make them, or any teacher, BETTER teachers? Certainly well intended, I doubt that this process has ever achieved this goal. Is this program intended to be inclusive or it is a final opportunity for the state to exclude teachers?

I have confidence in our college professors and university programs who are setting the standards so high that they are training the best teachers for our classrooms. As the WHEA President I have visited hundred of classrooms. Let me tell you....you have the BEST, and why use a process that was intended to drive passion into their hearts drive doubt, leaving them wondering if there really is such a thing as love for teaching? A love for teaching cannot be recorded, videotaped, or reduced to a mountain of paperwork; it can only be internally etched in a place that only a teacher and her student can be willing to go.

Please consider making changes to BEST so that these young, beautiful, and talented young people can bring their best as our education system undergoes significant reform. We need to embrace our new teachers.