

Remarks of Kathy Durner  
Teacher  
Enfield Public Schools

Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee & Education Committee  
February 27, 2008

Good afternoon, members of the Program Review & Investigations Committee and Education Committee. My name is Kathy Durner. I am a teacher in Enfield and I'm here to comment on Raised Bill 329 and Raised Bill 330, pertaining to the BEST program recommendations.

I have been an educator in the State of Connecticut for fifteen years and as a beginning teacher, I participated in the BEST program in an earlier format. For the last eight years, I have also served as a Mentor Teacher to BEST participants, as well as student teachers. I am committed to the belief that good teachers are "grown" and as such require a supportive environment. I consider myself a professional, passionate about providing the best possible education for our children and as such, I am willing and eager to help provide support to our beginning educators.

Yet, my experiences with the BEST mentoring program have left me frustrated, disillusioned, and unwilling to continue to serve as a Mentor teacher. Despite having voluntarily attended three separate Mentor training sessions sponsored by the State Dept. of Ed., I found myself with no clear vision of my role as mentor other than how it focused on the portfolio process. My time seemed to be devoted to helping my colleagues "pass" the portfolio rather than actually helping beginning teachers juggle the vast and myriad responsibilities a new teacher needs to keep in focus. Instead of meeting to discuss curriculum concerns, pacing plans, parent involvement, or assessments to guide instruction, etc., we spent hours reviewing and re-reading the artificial lessons produced to conform to the portfolio specifications. In one case, I was partnered with a beginning teacher who was not in my building which severely limited the frequency of our contact. In another, my colleague taught a significantly different

grade level which, while I could certainly provide the procedural and emotional support first year teachers need, it did nothing to helping the second year teacher understand the social, emotional and educational needs of her older students.

I have read the CEA's Program Recommendations and want to express my support for this document. In particular, I support strengthening the mentoring process by:

- Teacher- training programs with standards based student teaching rubrics
- Structured* multi-year support for beginning teachers
- Sufficient time to work together
- Incentives to provide adequate staffing to make appropriate matches

Your dedication and concern for the issues surrounding our future educators is vital. Research has shown that the caliber of the teacher directly affects the performance of the students. We need programs that provide for mentoring and support so that those with the dedication and desire to excel are supported and encouraged, not driven out of the profession by adding unnecessary burdens to an already demanding profession.