

**Testimony of Gary Peluchette**  
**President, Bridgeport Education Association (BEA)**  
**Regarding Senate Bill 1139**  
**An Act Concerning Strategic Planning in State**  
**Education Policy and**  
**Assaults on Teachers**

Good Afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Gary Peluchette. I am the president of the Bridgeport Education Association which represents over 1500 certified educators in the City of Bridgeport. I am here to testify regarding Senate Bill 1139.

When a teacher is assaulted, the first person that they turn to for support is their building principal. When that principal has a low level of tolerance for a teacher on their staff being assaulted, the matter is handled expeditiously, with the proper protocols being followed, and a resolution that leaves the teacher able to go back to his or her classroom feeling that they are safe in their place of work.

Sadly, this is not always the case. I had a teacher come to me with a bruise on her face from where a student slapped her. She informed me that she filed a report with the police, but was told by her principal that she should not press charges, even though the student was a teenager, and knew that striking a teacher was wrong. The principal gave her the usual litany of reasons for not pressing charges, which included that the parent would probably file a DCF complaint and it would be a mark against the teacher, even if the charge was dismissed. He went on to say that such matters are best handled in the building, and did she really want to put herself in front of the Board of Education, which would call her reputation as a teacher into question.

I spoke with a first year teacher who put up his hands in self-defense to block the blow of a student wielding a chair, and was told by the principal that if he were a first year teacher, he wouldn't file a complaint. Needless to say, that teacher took a job in another district the following year. In some districts such as mine, not only can a student be returned to the same building after assaulting a teacher, but also that student can be placed back with the same teacher.

The reason some principals take the approach of sweeping the issue under the rug is to maintain appearances that there are no problems in their buildings. BEA strongly supports this bill because it will impose a fine and training for administrators who fail to follow the reporting law. This will result in more accurate reporting of the true number of assaults on teachers in the state, enable students who have assaulted teachers to get the services needed to correct their behavior issues, and make our classrooms the secure environments that they need to be in order to educate our students.

Thank you.