HARTFORD
Public Schools
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STEVEN J. ADAMOWSKI
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Testimony of: Jill Cutler Hodgman
Regarding an Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

OPENING CHOICE: Honorable Chairmen and Members of the Committee

TEXT OF TESTIMONY / STATEMENT OF POSITION:
My name is Jill Cutler Hodgman. I currently serve as the Chief Labor and Legal Services Officer for the Hartford Public Schools and have worked in labor relations for the Hartford Schools for more than eight years.

The Hartford Public Schools strongly supports adjusting the deadline, from April 1 to May 1, to notify a teacher that such teacher's contract will not be renewed for the following year. The current deadline of April 1 creates some significant obstacles for the school environment, for staff morale and for district operations.

First, the deadline requires the administrator evaluating the non-tenured teacher to complete a full year's evaluation procedure by February, which is only the sixth month of a ten month school year. This strikes both the evaluator and the teacher as incredibly early in the year to make a full year's assessment of the teacher's effectiveness. It requires the district's evaluation plan to mandate all the goal setting, observations, conferences, and year end summative for all non-tenured teachers be completed in February. Many principals struggle with meaningfully evaluating all such teachers so soon in the year.

Second, the teacher who has received notice that his/her contract will not be renewed for the following year is required to work for a minimum of four additional months after such notice for the very administrator and district who is not pleased with his/her performance. This can put an incredible strain on the relationship between the teacher and the administrator, which has a deleterious impact on the students and staff in the building; other than placing such individual on a paid leave, there is little a district can do when the relationship deteriorates. It has been my experience that the quality of the instruction by such a teacher often diminishes, such teacher uses leave time so students are without a certified teacher in the classroom, and the administrator is left without much recourse. Four months is a long time to continue employment after notice of the equivalent of a dismissal.

Third, in the case of budgetary cuts, the March 1 deadline is well before the budget is due to the City of Hartford and certainly before the district is aware of its funding/revenue for the following

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school year. As a consequence, the district is required to non-renew for budgetary reasons without knowing the specific number of position reductions. The timing difference requires the district either to not use the non-renewal process as intended or to overuse the process by non-renewing more non-tenured teachers than the district will need to, which is undermining to staff morale and school stability.

Finally, the state student testing (CMTs and CAPT) occurs in March each year when the written notice must be provided to teachers under the current law. As this testing period is sacrosanct in the school setting, it is incredibly disruptive to deliver these letters of non-renewal, and such delivery can serve as a distraction during an important and sensitive period of the school year.

For all of these reasons, it is helpful to have additional time to decide whether or not to continue the contract of a non-tenured teacher.

ENDING:
In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for allowing me to provide written testimony in favor of this bill before you today and would be happy to make myself available, should you have any questions. I ask that you support **Raised Bill 6499,** ***AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES.***

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