



Anna Marcucio
Testimony on Senate Bill No. 1160

Chairs Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Vice Chairs Senator Fonfara, Representative McCrory and Ranking Members Senator Boucher and Representative Giuliano and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify about Senate Bill 1160, An Act Concerning School Transportation, The Development of a Model Teacher Performance Evaluation System, and Teacher Tenure Laws and Cooperative Arrangements.

My name is Anna Marcucio. I am the Chief Operating Officer at ConnCAN. We are building a movement of concerned citizens advocating to fundamentally reform our public schools through smart public policies.

Among other things, Senate Bill 1160 proposes to require the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council ("Council") to develop a model teacher performance evaluation system.

This is an important and significant step forward, and we commend the Committee for raising this bill for consideration. It represents a starting point, but we believe it can be improved.

We can use this framework to develop a meaningful evaluation system to support and keep our best teachers in the classroom. Please consider the following improvements:

1. This bill does not address seniority-based layoffs – and if there is not an immediate fix for last-in, first-out policies in this bill, we risk losing thousands of great teachers this year. We need a bill that provides districts with flexibility to keep our best teachers in the classroom. We can do this by using already existing and objective measures such as: consistent unsatisfactory performance reviews, chronic absenteeism, specialized training, or extraordinary merit.

In the long term, this bill needs to make clear that evaluation ratings should be included as a significant factor in layoff decisions.

2. I urge the committee to consider using student achievement growth as a significant factor in the rating of teacher performance. Other factors in an evaluation could include: classroom observation, teacher professional practice, and peer review. The New Haven model, as well as teacher evaluation models in

other states such as Delaware, Rhode Island, Colorado and proposed legislation in Illinois, offer strong examples for Connecticut on this front.

By doing so, this legislation would connect directly to last year's Public Act 10-111 that requires the state's model evaluation system to correlate with "multiple indicators of student academic growth."

Federal funds are moving in the direction of requiring robust teacher evaluation systems to be in place; improving the SB 1160 in this way is essential if Connecticut is to be competitive for future federal funds, which we have been unable to secure in significant amounts to date. Last year we earned less than \$8.00 per student in recent competitive federal funding bids, while all of our neighboring states have received in the hundreds – from \$308 in New York, to \$324 in Massachusetts, to \$516 in Rhode Island.

3. I urge the committee to **consider adding state and national expertise to the Performance Advisory Council to ensure that it can effectively carry out its charge.** Creating a teacher evaluation system is an extremely complicated task, one that other states have already undertaken. We can and should benefit from the experiences of other states and from the advice of national experts. To develop a truly effective teacher evaluation system, the Committee should consider broadening the Council's membership and adding additional expertise.

4. **This bill does not seem to make the state system mandatory if a district has developed its own (potentially weaker) system.** The bill should only give districts that have developed an approach that is comparable to or better than the state's model system the ability to opt out of the state's model and use their own system, perhaps subject to review and approval by the State Board of Education or the Commissioner.

5. **This bill still allows for an ineffective teacher to remain on the job for a rather long time** (and research shows that is NOT a good thing for students).

- It allows for up to one year for the improvement process and "initiation of dismissal proceedings." So a teacher has only one year to show improvement. That's a step in the right direction, but it does not specify whether that must be in the same academic year in which the teacher demonstrates that he/she needs improvement. This is implied but not specified.
- It also does not clearly specify the timeline for the evaluations to take place and be submitted, and should more clearly spell this out.
- The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council is supposed to work out the dismissal process in accordance with existing statutes. The process

shall not exceed 100 days from the time the administrator files the summative assessment at the end of the 1-year period. This means that an ineffective teacher going through this process could remain in the classroom and could be teaching for another whole academic year. We want to protect teachers' right to due process, but also need to ensure a timely and cost-effective way to handle dismissals.

6. The legislation allows for lots of people, in addition to the evaluating administrator, to be involved in the evaluation and could potentially weaken the effect of the evaluation.

Ideally, the evaluation would involve an evaluating administrator and/or an instructional manager/lead teacher (more like the New Haven model) who were trained in how to conduct evaluations and had the ability to make professional judgments using an agreed-upon set of criteria.

7. This bill does not connect obtaining tenure to the evaluation system.

Currently, most teachers earn tenure after four years, regardless of their effectiveness. A stronger plan would only allow teachers to obtain tenure after showing strong performance for consecutive years, and tenure status should be subject to periodic review based on a teacher's evaluation ratings.

8. This bill does not spell out a common rating framework and does not require the Council to do so. This means that there could be very different rating systems across the state and rating categories. At a minimum, we should have the same ratings categories across all teacher evaluation systems in the state. And, ideally, those ratings would be equivalent so that "highly effective" or "needs improvement" or whatever term we chose generally means the same thing across Connecticut.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on SB 1160. We look forward to working with you to make the suggested improvements to this bill.