



AFT Connecticut
AFLAFL-CIO

Healthcare
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Testimony
Education Committee
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Happy St. Patrick's Day Sen. Stillman, Rep. Fleischmann and members of the Committee. On this beautiful day I am Sharon Murphy Palmer, Pres., AFT Connecticut, a diverse 28,000 member AFL-CIO union. Thank you for providing this hearing opportunity.

I am here today to support HB1160 concerning teacher evaluation and tenure. Actually, this is our vision of how teacher evaluation should work. I thank the chairs for allowing AFT Connecticut to share our ideas about crafting meaningful teacher evaluation.

Teacher evaluation statutes are currently under review and discussion by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and that work will continue. We believe it is important to put a framework around that initiative. The bill spells out a process of teacher evaluation, support, improvement and remediation if needed. If remediation is necessary, a plan and program must be implemented and can continue for no longer than one school year.

It is extremely important to us that evaluation inform practice and provide real opportunity for teachers to improve. It should not be a "gotcha" process, but rather one that coaches teachers toward better performance. The bill also requires labor/management collaboration on the design of an appropriate system. Quality teaching comes from quality evaluation, coaching and



professional development, not by asserting that seniority is "quality blind". We are also very concerned about the large number of talented new teachers who are leaving our urban districts. We believe a robust and supportive system of evaluation may help with retention of those teachers.

We are also well aware of the debate regarding teacher competency and "bad" teachers in our ranks. It is often said that the process is too long and too expensive. We do not want incompetent teachers in our ranks, but we do demand fairness and due process for them. Therefore we are supporting the language in 1160 which limits the proceedings to 100 days should a dismissal proceeding be initiated.

We've heard over and over from legislators across the state that they would like a New Haven-style agreement in their local districts, but that takes an incredible amount of work that not every district is prepared to undertake. SB 1160 begins this process for them and allows them then to make adjustments that suit the unique needs of their individual districts.

Support of this bill is a bold step for AFT Connecticut and one which we do not take lightly. We hope you will join us in support of this proposed legislation. Please include us in discussions regarding the bill. This is an important and groundbreaking endeavor.

Thank you.