

## TESTIMONY

of Lisa Thomson

### **Regarding S.B. 1160: AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION, THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL TEACHER PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM, AND TEACHER TENURE LAWS AND COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS.**

Senators and Representatives of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony regarding S.B. 1160, To study issues relating to school transportation; to require the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council to develop a model teacher performance evaluation system for use by local and regional boards of education and regional educational service centers; and to include employment in a cooperative arrangement as part of the definition of tenure for purposes of teacher tenure laws.

My particular testimony relates to the development of a model teacher performance evaluation system for use by local and regional boards of education and regional educational service centers.

I wholly support and endorse your initiation of bill to study this particular issue, as well as teacher tenure, as I consider each to be critical components with respect to addressing the dire condition of Connecticut's economy and national ranking of our educational achievement gap.

I am an executive member and co-founder of a grass roots organization, known as *R.Ed APPLES of Norwalk* ([www.redapplesnorwalk.org](http://www.redapplesnorwalk.org)), which has 70+ registered members that include parents, PTC/PTA Presidents, taxpayers, concerned citizens, neighborhood activists, politicians and local business owners.

We are political but non-partisan, independent, pro education and pro teacher, but most importantly, pro educational change and reform. Although we are located in Fairfield County, Norwalk is an urban school district, with high levels of poverty and a significant amount of at-risk children that need to have qualified staff instructing them.

Connecticut ranks near the top on per pupil spending, but at the bottom in terms of closing its achievement gap. While educational funding cannot be ignored (particularly during these incredibly challenging economic times) it is clearly not the ONLY driver in terms of advancing student achievement, particularly as it relates to education in the State of Connecticut.

While the teacher evaluation process and last-in, first-out policies are no doubt fraught with challenges with respect to how to make it fair, I humbly ask members of the Education

Committee, is it fair to shortchange a child's education, with a teacher that is not performing, underperforming or failing?

We know that the vast majority of teachers and principals are delivering great performance and inspiration to students, but we are caught up in a system where we can no more recognize those successful educators than get rid of the ineffective ones. And, we've been caught up in this debate for years and years now. While we debate, our children slip farther and farther behind.

Meaningful evaluations or assessments or development plans are not standard at the state level and are too prone to the whims of individual school district union contracts. So, when we find ourselves in the economic crisis that we find ourselves in today, we cannot make sure that the right layoffs are occurring when times get tough.

I hope that the members of the Education Committee will rigorously discuss and debate the teacher evaluation process to ensure that we have the most qualified teachers teaching and that the layoff policy is re-examined.

Thank you very much for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Thomson  
Co Founder - Red APPLES of Norwalk