

Testimony before the Education Committee
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Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Sherese Ward, Government Relations & Policy Director for Connecticut BAEO, the Black Alliance for Educational Options; an organization established to create and expand high quality school choice options in our state, through advocacy for effective policies that work to eliminate the achievement gap across socio-economic and racial lines.

I'm here today to speak in support of **Raised Bill No. 1160**, An Act Concerning Transportation, The Development of a Model Teacher Performance Evaluation System, and Teacher Tenure Laws and Cooperative Arrangements.

I come before you now, for the third time this session to speak in support of this key piece of legislation, which I deem compulsory for our state to institute, as a means of further moving towards the sustained education reforms that my organization and so many other advocates have been diligently working in support of for several years.

I'm pleased that this committee thought it a priority to clarify the role of the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council with the intent of developing a model teacher evaluation system designed to implement evaluation guidelines and data collection for educators, but I believe we need to do more. Currently, **Public Act 10-111 calls for the use of student achievement data as a key component of a teacher evaluation tool, an element not currently contemplated in this legislation.** Ultimately these efforts are designed with the aim of propelling student learning, and **it is essential that their growth and success become a mandated element of this bill.**

Secondly, CT BAEO's state director, Danielle Smith provided testimony to this committee specific to the improvements we thought **vital to ensuring that the process of teacher layoffs were conducted in a manner that allowed schools to make decisions that enable them to retain their most qualified and highest performing teachers in the classroom.** The passing of this legislation would be the impetus in allowing us to truly take that first step forward, but it is necessary that we prioritize this.

While it was expected that this council's representative body be comprised of the associations outlined in this bill, **I urge this committee to significantly enhance representation of the subject matter experts called for, in performance evaluation; taking seriously the complexities of establishing an effective teacher evaluation system,** AND understanding that the lives and futures of our children depend upon it. Additionally, **I think it important to assess what models and existing best practices in teacher evaluation exist nationally, not simply replicating what has already been done locally.** If we are serious about reforming education for our neediest student populations of Black and Latino students and families, then we have an imperative to push ourselves, even further, as we endeavor this process swiftly, and in a fashion that allows for our students to benefit in real time.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak before this committee today.