

## **Testimony of June Kozloski, Waterbury Teacher**

### **Before the Judiciary Committee**

**Wednesday, March 30, 2011**

**Re: Senate Bill 1163**

### **An Act Concerning Assault of a School Employee**

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is June Kozloski and I have been a teacher in Connecticut for 10 years. For the past 7 years, I have been an Art teacher at the middle school level in Waterbury. During the first few years of my middle school teaching assignment, I was injured a number of times in stopping fights and altercations between students. Three times I was injured where I needed to consider and pursue medical attention.

The first experience I had with student assault was by a sixth grade girl involved in a fight with another sixth grade girl. During their argument, I tried to stop them from going to physical exchanges and became the victim of one girl's punch which landed to my right jaw. It took two other teachers to restrain this student from further injuring individuals around the area.

The second assault was by an 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy who decided that he had to check out who was in the hallway. I requested that he return to his seat. He decided to take his arm and knock me to my back onto the floor. Two teachers came running out to stop this student from further injuring me. Luckily, I was not seriously hurt, just a little bruised.

Another assault resulted in more physical injury for me. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade girl refused to come into the classroom at the start of class. She appeared over 10 minutes late. When this student finally appeared at my classroom door, I asked her for her tardy pass. Her response was to shove me with all her weight, causing me to propel backwards. I luckily regained my balance. Asking her again for her tardy pass, she came at me with more force and succeeded in shoving me so hard that my left hip tendons were torn. I was a runner for over 16 years. This incident caused extreme pain which has made running unbearable.

I have been fortunate to have a school administration that has been supportive of my rights to press charges against the offending students. Our resident officers are readily available to document the incidents and do the required paperwork to record the incidents.

Being that I have not always been an educator, I have been amazed at the emotional and irrational behaviors that have become commonplace in educational institutions. Coming from a professional background, I never was fearful or apprehensive of going to work and worrying about my safety at my job. However, over the past 10 years, I have witnessed this increasingly alarming condition invading the schools and classrooms. I am concerned for my classroom population and my own physical safety.

Our youth have shown a growing dismissive attitude towards physical harm whether as "playful" contact or in the form of intentional harmful engagement. I hear all too often, "I don't care" from these students when asked why they do it. Their acceptance of physical violence is a huge concern in schools today. To have youngsters showing any form of verbal or physical disrespect towards the

adults and their peers in a learning setting is undermining the purpose of educating our youth in schools.

Much of my days in front of my students is spent demonstrating and encouraging integrity and kindness to others. If my students cannot be respectful of all of us in the classroom, the learning process and experience is not as successful as it should be. My students should all be able to learn in a safe and nurturing setting. They should never have to fear being safe. They should be able to concentrate on obtaining knowledge and the ability to pursue life-time learning in their future.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that you support **Senate Bill 1163**.

Thank you for your time.