

Remarks of Dr. Linette Branham  
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Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee

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Good afternoon Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

I'm Dr. Linette Branham, the Director of Policy and Professional Practice for the Connecticut Education Association, and a certified teacher and administrator. You've heard a lot of comment today about a professional educator standards board, and I'd like to give you a few additional concepts to consider as you discuss this issue further.

Teachers have been accused of being after a 'power grab' in advocating for an independent standards board. This isn't about power. It isn't about a teacher dictatorship in the profession. It's about reform. It's about restructuring our system to move practice forward more effectively and efficiently. The processes that have been used in the past – gathering together groups of educators to ask their 'advice' about proposed changes, rather than asking educators what needs to be changed – don't work. A restructuring of the system is about giving educators from a variety of settings – the classroom, administration, and higher education – the authority to work together and make decisions to create changes that govern our profession, just as other professions do.

Having decision-making authority isn't a big leap forward in practice, but people think it is. That's because they don't understand that the skills and processes educators would use to govern our profession – especially decision-making – are used by educators every day as we do our work. On average, classroom teachers make 1500 decisions in a 6-hour school day....about four decisions every minute. Educators are masters at making appropriate decisions. The processes of teamwork that an independent standards board would use are already being used by educators in their districts as they've designed how the TEAM program will run, how teacher

evaluation plans will look, as they've made curricular changes, planned activities to engage parents, and in many other ways. In short, educators have the skills to govern the profession, but just haven't been given the structure or opportunity to do so.

Perhaps the most important thing we all need to remember and consider when discussing the merits of an independent standards board is this: change begins with those who will be most affected by it. When people try to impose change without the change being created by those who are affected, resistance is much more likely. Our history abounds with examples of how this has played out. If we really want to bring education reform to our state, we need to think differently about *how* we should bring reform. We need to think about how to get those who will be most affected by it – educators – more actively involved in creating and implementing the reforms. Giving them more decision-making authority through a professional educator standards board is one necessary first step.