

**Testimony of Carmella Lorusso, Grievance Chair
Bridgeport Education Association
Concerning 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 Carmella Lorusso. I am an eighth grade teacher in Bridgeport as well as the Grievance Chair for the Bridgeport Education Association (BEA) which represents over 1,500 certified educators in the City of Bridgeport.

As I communicate with teachers throughout the district, I hear an increasingly alarming number of stories from teachers who have been assaulted by their students. It begins as early as kindergarten and goes right through twelfth grade. Unfortunately, many teachers never report to anyone how they have been victimized and many times the information I receive comes to me from a concerned friend and not the victims themselves.

A middle school teacher at Read School told me just last Friday that he was assaulted twice. The first time he was shoved into a wall hurting his shoulder. The second time he was simply following the Discipline Code when he took away a cell phone from a student. The student came up to him and put his hands all over the teacher's body trying to find the phone in one of his pockets. The administrator's reply to this was what did you do that made the student feel he could do this to you?

At Harding High School, a teacher was punched in the face by a student inside the building for refusing to open the exterior door for a person who wouldn't identify himself to the teacher.

At Central High School, a teacher was knocked to the floor hurting his arm and shoulder for asking a student for his ID.

At Bryant School, a kindergarten student pushed and kicked his teacher breaking her wrist.

I myself was pushed by a student trying to enter my classroom when he shouldn't have been there.

These are just a few of many examples where teachers are being assaulted physically by students. Often, the students who commit these acts are not even punished by the school administration.

I have worked in the BEA grievance office for the last eight years and the numbers of assaults are steadily increasing, not only on teachers but staff in general. We need to strengthen the penalties for these crimes. Every person has the right to a safe and orderly

environment. An environment where the staff feels safe translates to a safer environment for students.

Please support **Senate Bill 1163** because it will provide stricter penalties for those individuals who physically harm school employees.

Thank you.