

**Remarks of Phil Apruzzese
President, Connecticut Education Association**

**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Section 28 - Teacher Evaluation**

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Phil Apruzzese, I'm a fifth grade teacher in Wethersfield, and president of the Connecticut Education Association. Today I'd like to comment on Senate Bill 24 and the dangers of tying teacher evaluation to certification.

Evaluating a teacher requires high level skills. It's a complex process that asks the evaluator to be an astute observer of live classroom practice, gather data by multiple methods and from multiple sources, analyze several different types of data, synthesize the information gleaned from that data, and make a sound judgment based on the data. The Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) has agreed to base teacher evaluation primarily on professional practice and indicators of student growth and development, and to strongly link evaluation to professional development that will support teaching and learning. CEA believes that appropriate professional development *should* be the main outcome of a sound evaluation system.

CEA has endorsed PEAC's work as a leap of faith, despite the cautions experts have cited in designing effective teacher evaluation systems. Some of these concerns include the following:

1. Student test scores are the result of learning that is cumulative, not the result of instruction from any one teacher;
2. Many other factors influence a student's performance on a test, despite efforts to control for those factors, and many of those factors are beyond the teacher's control;
3. Student tests are not designed to determine *teacher* effectiveness;
4. More than three-fourths of the teachers in Connecticut teach subjects that are not tested by the CMT or CAPT, and many teachers do not have responsibility for direct instruction of students, which leads one to ask how using student test scores can fairly be used to evaluate them;
5. Using a type of teacher portfolio can be very subjective;
6. Examining other instructional artifacts produced by the teacher, and other indicators of student learning, requires that evaluators be well trained in how to use them in evaluation;
7. To conduct evaluation appropriately will require more time and effort from evaluators, and administrators don't have the time available to do so;
8. To provide the amount of training and proficiency testing for evaluators that will be needed to support this system on an ongoing basis will be extremely costly, and there is no guarantee the funding will be there; and

9. The timeline proposed for full implementation in this bill is unrealistic; it attempts to do too much too soon without enough time for proper field testing and refinement.

We shouldn't be so eager and willing to experiment with basing certification, and a teacher's ability to teach in *any* district in the state, on a system that is not yet designed, that faces challenges in addressing these concerns, that hasn't been tested and refined, and that has no research saying this is sound practice. We run the risk of losing good teachers, of evaluation becoming a 'gotcha' practice, and of establishing a culture of fear, rather than collaboration, in our schools. Most importantly, using evaluation that is based on 'shaky' factors to determine certification runs counter to the four criteria PEAC has agreed evaluation must meet: that it is valid, reliable, fair, and useful.

On behalf of the 43,000 members of the Connecticut Education Association, I urge you to reject Senate Bill 24. Thank you for your time today.