

Remarks of Elizabeth Garrity
Fifth grade teacher
Willington Public Schools

For the Education Committee

On Senate Bill 24

Teacher Certification and Evaluation

March 12, 2012

My name is Elizabeth Garrity, and I'm a teacher in Willington. Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I would like to comment on Senate Bill 24 regarding teacher certification and evaluation.

I would first like to state that I love teaching. I've known since I was in second grade, and had Mrs. Plummer, that I wanted to be a teacher. I work 10+ hours a day at my job. I am one of the first to arrive at school and I am one of the last to leave. I am always thinking of my students. What can I say or do to muster motivation, courage or bravery to try that hard math problem, read that chapter book, or create an extension project. I love my profession.

I am shocked at the fact that Governor Malloy's bill is eliminating the requirement for a master's degree. I finished my master's degree in reading two years ago, and from those classes, and learning in them, I have strengthened my craft of teaching reading. One of my classes I took was on the art of the picture book. For my class I had to read tons of picture books and I shared a lot of them with my students of that time. I still have students that speak of the enjoyment that they received from me reading these books aloud to the class. These students are in ninth and tenth grade and they still recall this. Through the picture books we were able to discuss basic elements of story structure, context clues, and the use of strong vocabulary. But the learning did not stop there. We continued to explore these pieces of literature for theme, tone, and critical thinking. One thing I know about reading is that students have to be "turned on" to reading. This happens when a teacher reads aloud a book, or shares a snippet from a book; if it turns a student into a reader, that is the greatest achievement. How did I strengthen my abilities to turn students into reading? Simple, I continued my education and received a master's degree. Just this year there was a student in another classroom who told me that he "hates to read". Well, after he told me that I pondered on what I could do to help him see the pleasure in reading. I thought about it at school. I thought about it that night. I then thought about it some more the next morning at school. Then I had an idea. I would start that student on audio books. Now, four months later, that same student loves reading. Daily, he questions his teacher as to when he can read more, and his mother says that at home he is always reading! Also, in his classroom he debates plot and characters' actions with other students who are reading the same series. The student has recently told me that he loves reading; and that by listening to audio books while following along with the text he has become a stronger reader. Where did I learn more about audio books, and thinking outside the box to create stronger readers? I learned about reading by furthering my education with a master's degree.

Please take my thoughts and concerns while making your decision about this bill.