

TESTIMONY BEFORE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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**CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
SUPERINTENDENTS**

THIS HEARING IS BEING CONDUCTED AT AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME IN CT, A TIME WHEN WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN TRANSFORMING OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM SO THAT IT CAN GUARANTEE THAT EVERY CHILD WILL LEARN WHAT THEY NEED TO LEARN TO LEAD DECENT AND PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

TRANSFORMATION IS BEING CALLED FOR IN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN WORD ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE, ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE VERY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON SOME ISSUES HAVE FOUND COMMON GROUND ON KEY TRANSFORMATIVE ISSUES, A NEWLY SELECTED COMMISSIONER HAS REFOCUSSED THE ENTERPRISE ON TRANSFORMATION AND THE GOVERNOR HAS PUT FORTH A SET OF

PROPOSALS THAT WILL START US DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS THE EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT WE NEED TO BE. IT IS NOW UP TO THE LEGISLATURE TO MAKE THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS THAT NEED TO BE MADE IF WE ARE TO MOVE FORWARD.

WHILE OUR ASSOCIATION HAS SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING A FEW OF THE FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE GOVERNOR, WE SUPPORT WHAT HE HAS PROPOSED ACROSS THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT. TIME DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO ADDRESS THAT ENTIRE SPECTRUM TODAY SO LET ME ADDRESS THE ISSUE THAT MIGHT BE THE MOST DIFFICULT ONE FOR YOU TO CONSIDER AND ONE THAT YOU HAVE TO ADDRESS IF WE ARE TO BEGIN TRANSFORMATION, THE EVALUATION OF AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS AND THE CONNECTED ISSUES OF RETENTION OR DISMISSAL. WE CANNOT RAISE THE BAR FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND EXPECT ALL STUDENTS TO MEET THAT HIGHER STANDARD IF WE DO NOT AT THE SAME TIME RAISE THE BAR FOR EFFECTIVE

PERFORMANCE BY SUPERINTENDENTS, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS.

ALL OF US WHO REPRESENT THE CARETAKERS OF THE SYSTEM OF WHICH CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ON THE CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR A TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATION SYSTEM, ONE IN WHICH GROWTH IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, PEER REVIEW AND STUDENT AND PARENT INPUT WILL COMPRISE 60% OF THE EVALUATION OF A TEACHER OR PRINCIPAL. THOSE REQUIREMENTS GUARANTEE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS THE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE THAT THEY NEED TO IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE. THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS APPROVED THESE CORE REQUIREMENTS UNANIMOUSLY.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS NOW NEED TO BE GUARANTEED THAT THOSE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS WHOSE PERFORMANCE DOES NOT IMPROVE TO THE EFFECTIVE LEVEL EVEN AFTER RECEIVING SUPPORT AND

ASSISTANCE WILL NO LONGER BE TRUSTED WITH THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN. THE GOVERNOR HAS RECOGNIZED THIS IN HIS RECOMMENDATION FOR REVISING TENURE.

I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT YOU'VE BEEN BESIEGED BY TEACHERS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS RECOMMENDATION. SOME HAVE TOLD YOU THAT IF ENACTED, THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION WILL ENABLE SUPERINTENDENTS TO TRIM THEIR BUDGETS BY FIRING TEACHERS WITH THE HIGHEST SALARIES DESPITE THEIR GOOD PERFORMANCES. LET ME ADDRESS THAT CONCERN.

UNDER THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION, NO TEACHER WHOSE PERFORMANCE IS EITHER AT THE PROFICIENT OR MASTER LEVEL CAN BE FIRED. SO, IF SUPERINTENDENTS WANT TO ELIMINATE EFFECTIVE BUT HIGHLY PAID TEACHERS, THEY WOULD HAVE TO SOMEHOW CHANGE STUDENTS' RESPONSES ON ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS AND ALSO ALTER THE

RESULTS OF PEER REVIEW AND STUDENT AND PARENT INPUT, COMPONENTS THAT WILL COMPRISE 60% OF TEACHERS EVALUATIONS. THIS WOULD BE PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DO.

BESIDES, I CAN TELL YOU WITHOUT RESERVATION THAT SUPERINTENDENTS REALIZE THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS THAT THEY LEAD DEPENDS IN LARGE PART ON HAVING HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS REGARDLESS OF HOW MUCH THEY COST.

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, WE HAVE ALL HEARD AND AT TIMES PROMULGATED OURSELVES THE RHETORIC ABOUT HAVING TO IMPROVE SYSTEMICALLY AND DRAMATICALLY THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE STATE. IN OTHER WORDS, WE HAVE ALL TALKED THE TALK.

TODAY, SOME OF US HAVE BEGUN TO WALK THE WALK. SUPERINTENDENTS, BOARDS OF EDUCATION, PRINCIPALS, BUSINESS PEOPLE, THE REFORM COMMUNITY, THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION AND

THE GOVERNOR AMONG OTHERS HAVE GONE BEYOND RHETORIC AND PROPOSED NEEDED CHANGES IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM. THIS WAS NOT EASY TO DO. IF IT WAS EASY, THE CHANGES WOULD HAVE BEEN ENACTED YEARS AGO.

THE TALK ABOUT THE NEED TO CHANGE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM HAS ALSO REVERBERATED IN THE HALLS OF THE LEGISLATURE. NOW, IT'S TIME FOR THE LEGISLATURE TO ALSO GO BEYOND RHETORIC AND WALK THE WALK. EVERY POLL THAT ANYONE HAS DONE RECENTLY HAS INDICATED THAT THE PEOPLE OF CT ARE READY TO SUPPORT THE NEEDED CHANGES INCLUDING THE REVISION OF TENURE THAT I'VE ADDRESSED.

I REALIZE THAT SUPPORTING THE NEEDED CHANGES MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR SOME OF YOU POLITICALLY. FROM WATCHING YOU MEET YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, HOWEVER, I'M CONFIDENT THAT YOU'LL DO WHAT IS RIGHT DESPITE THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. THE SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE STATE ALONG WITH THE ORGANIZATION THAT REPRESENTS THEM ARE READY TO WALK THIS WALK WITH YOU.

