

TESTIMONY In Regards to SB 24 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS.

Rep. Fleischmann, Sen. Stillman, and Education Committee Members

Please accept this testimony in support of the general goals of Senate Bill 24. I speak as a science teacher who has worked with children pre-K through grade 12 for most of my adult life, even when I was employed in a non-education field. I have served children in a pre-K program and developed program for developmental assessment and have taught advanced placement classes in the science field.

“Science is life” When I address classes for the first time - I challenge students to give me a subject I can not relate to science. For over 10 years, they have not been able to come up with one. As I have watched the changes in Connecticut’s education system, I had been impressed with the turn towards science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM). Being a second career public school teacher - I have seen the needs in medicine, industry and the everyday workforce for people who have a strong education in the STEM content area. While reading and math are the backbone on which science is supported; if we delay years to encourage and foster creativity and innovation then we will be falling far behind the students of the world whose focus is in a holistic approach to education.

In speaking with colleagues about the focus of education, all agree that approaching the world of literacy is best done through the arts and sciences. History/social studies teachers are continuing to fall by the wayside because their subject is not deemed “important” enough by state law makers to include in state-mandated testing. Time, money and the best of people have been moved to work in math and literacy areas because social studies doesn’t “need” the same attention as these areas. If lawmakers take science off the “testing” docket- we will only see the art of experimentation and the exploration of natural curiosity suffer in the same way the search for historical perspective has. Why would we want to narrow the investigation of possible areas of pursuit in our children? As educators our job is to nurture a students’ natural ability to reason systematically and garner that knowledge to unravel complex ideas and propose various solutions for resolution. I am in agreement with the Board on Science Education within the National Academy of Sciences that “science, engineering, and technology permeate every aspect of modern life...” Knowledge of science and engineering is essential to the understanding of the major public policy issues of today. Not only is science necessary for decision making, science is necessary in each aspect of our lives and serves as the thread which weaves together the subjects of math and literacy. Science is the “strong base” required to build the foundation, as well as the method of transformation of original ideas from curiosity through to structure. Each students needs an early start in the methodology of science to make viable, practical everyday decisions. If time constraints are mandated by state law for the amount of time students spend on math and literacy; then students will lose valuable exploration time. By forcing schools and classrooms to adopt schedules inconsistent with student learning; students will lose even more interest in going to school.

Please make sure that Connecticut's bill is aligned with the CSDE plan to include science. Please allow for flexibility in scheduling especially in low performing schools. And please, make sure STEM/Science is included as part of the accountability measures for the good of our students and our state.

Regards,

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