

**Remarks of Melanie Guerin
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Capitol Region Education Council**

**Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**

February 21, 2012

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

Hello, my name is Melanie Guerin, and I have been a music teacher in the state of Connecticut for eight years. I hold a bachelor's degree in music performance and education and a master's degree in music education from the Hartt School, which has been recognized as one of the top music educator training programs in the country. Because there is not currently a standardized test for the subjects that I teach, I have the freedom to shape a curriculum around state and national standards, my students' interests and abilities, and my own passions and values. I also have the time to delve deeply into topics, demand critical thinking from my students, and utilize authentic assessments that require my students to think, act, and solve problems like real musicians.

What I do not have is a simple way for a non-musician to evaluate my effectiveness. I have worked with some very effective administrators who set high standards and dedicate themselves to providing teachers resources to help them meet those standards. These administrators welcome input and acknowledge teachers' expertise in their respective subject areas, while also valuing the perspective they acquire from being on the "front lines" of education every day in their classrooms. I have also worked with administrators who are most interested in being in charge, who make decisions based on what will look good in a recruitment poster, and who respond to the questioning of their decisions with intimidation and bullying.

It is my experience with this second type of administrator that causes my grave concern over Governor Malloy's plan to vest a single person with the power to determine my tenure and salary. An administrator with little knowledge about music is ill-equipped to distinguish between a proficient music educator and an exemplary one. A proficient music educator can put on an impressive concert, but an exemplary one will demand student ownership of the artistic process, critical thinking, independent musicianship, and music literacy. To encourage such an exemplary music educator to water down her standards and rearrange her priorities to please an uninformed evaluator is both insulting and futile. The exemplary music educators I know would never do this. They would, however, take a job offer in another state where their training and expertise are respected.

Standardized testing for music is far down the road, especially considering the precarious nature of arts programs in the current economy. (How can we hold a high school music educator to any kind of standard when we have cut the middle school music program entirely?) This puts an

incredible amount of weight in one person's judgment, and more importantly provides a strong incentive for educators who want to feel respected to seek jobs in other states.