

Connecticut Education Committee Members,

My name is Milly Arciniegas. I am a parent of Hartford and I am testifying in support of SB 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

I am a very involved parent of two beautiful children who have both experienced attending a low performing school for eight years of their lives in Hartford, CT.

Eight years ago I did not know I was dropping off my children to a low performing school. Both my sons were honor students and scored mostly A's on their report cards, I barely had to help them with their homework and the teachers always told me how great they were doing. I was a proud parent and worked very hard to ensure my children had everything they needed to be successful in school.

Eight years later, before one of my sons graduated from the 8th grade, we had to choose a high school he felt best met his interest and was going to challenge him. He chose to apply to a high school outside of Hartford where he would have to write an essay explaining why he wanted to attend that particular school. After working on his essay for about three days, he showed it to me to review it. When I reviewed the essay I was shocked to see so many misspelled words and how it read as if a 5th grader wrote it. After several attempts to correct the essay, it was clear to me that my son did not have the necessary skills to be able to write a great essay to get accepted to the high school of his choice.

When I went back to the school to ask the teachers, "How can an eighth grade student who always scored A's in English not be able to write an essay at the 8th grade level?" The answers I received were completely unacceptable. The English teacher told me "he will get better as he gets older." The Social Studies teacher told me, "I don't care how the children write as long as they get the right answer." Clearly, no one wanted to be accountable.

Because I caught it early on during my son's eighth grade year, the eighth grade teacher worked with him after school to ensure my son received the necessary skills needed to write a great essay. I had to endure watching my son's self-esteem go from thinking he was an A student to questioning his capabilities. I also watched a great teacher who took the time to help my son, only to be criticized by her colleagues because she was helping my son on her own time.

Bottom line is we can and should do better for all children, so they receive a high quality education. We teach our kids everyday you have to work hard to be successful in whatever you choose to do when you grow up and I believe the same should apply for teachers. I fully support **SB 24** because there will be more objective measures of teacher effectiveness, and we can determine how much a student progresses within a teacher's class over the course of a year. It also will ensure we keep great teachers in the classroom to help put an end to this achievement gap once and for all.

Thank you for your time.