

Remarks of Faith Sweeney
Literacy Specialist
Greenwich Public Schools

Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Sections 28
Teacher Certification Requirements
February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Representative Fleishman, Senator Stillman and members of the education committee. My name is Faith Sweeney and I am a Literacy Specialist for the Greenwich Public Schools. I'd like to comment today on Senate Bill 24's proposal to eliminate the requirement for *all* teachers to have advanced education.

The message I constantly model and encourage my students to do is to be life long learners. While the state required that I earn a Master's degree to maintain certification, I chose my field of study based on the needs of my students as an elementary classroom teacher. After 5 years of teaching, I decided to work on a Master's degree in reading and writing, so that I could improve my teaching skills, help the achievement of my students and to close the gap. My experience has shown that increased education based on the needs of my students has proven to be a valuable asset as an educator and to my district. We cannot rely on these alternate hopes that no Master's degree training and district level professional development will achieve the same results.

While attaining my Masters degree in reading and writing, my students saw first hand that I was a learner, too. These students saw my learning and teaching grow. This is an important message we must continue to send to our students. Education is an ever changing arena and obtaining a Master's degree in a field directly related to students' needs has a positive impact.

The years following my Master's degree in reading and writing, gave me the opportunity to hone in on the quality of instruction I delivered to my students. A Bachelor's degree is not

enough. On the job experience is important, too, and that is why after 5 years, I made the decision to focus on what was needed with the ever growing achievement gap: a teacher who would have effective instructional strategies in reading and writing.

Finally, I became a Literacy Specialist which focused my specific skills to the betterment of the district. I would not have this position without having my Master's degree. I would hope that this requirement is maintained and not just an option. I would hope that my decision to increase my education and change my position in the district would not impact my tenure status. I hope you will consult with more teachers about revising these reforms. I request that you seriously consider not passing this bill.

Thank you!