

Remarks of Robert B. Wyllie  
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For the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24, Section 33  
Superintendent Certification Waiver

February 21, 2012

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

My name is Robert Wyllie and I am a full-time middle school art teacher in East Hampton, Connecticut. I also happen to be a constituent of Senator Stillman's. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 33 regarding the superintendent certification waiver. The town in which I teach has a well-qualified superintendent who has had classroom experience as a teacher. During my twenty six year career, every superintendent I have worked for has come from the field of public education. I have held various positions within our local teacher's union, including vice-president and negotiations chair. I have had the opportunity to interact with the present superintendent as well as past superintendents, and have found that because of these superintendents' knowledge and experiences in public schools, discussions having to do with negotiations, personnel issues, classroom, school or district issues have gone smoothly. Their understanding of what it takes to be a successful classroom teacher and the issues and problems that can arise has been a valuable touchstone to start any of the conversations having to do with issues I have already mentioned.

I currently work for a superintendent whose knowledge of day-to-day issues that teachers face has allowed the district and the union to solve many problems in a way that was quick, fair and equitable. Without my current superintendent's first-hand understanding of classrooms, teachers and their students, some of the aforementioned issues would not have been resolved as easily, or for that matter, at all. I have discovered that superintendents who have come up through the ranks have a deep understanding of the students we teach and their issues and problems. I find it hard to believe that a person, no matter how well-qualified from outside the realm of public education, would have a true and well-rounded understanding of the students we teach today. If Connecticut wants to see our public school system move forward in a positive way, I feel it is essential that the local leader in the

district, the superintendent of schools, have the basic understandings and knowledge of which I have just spoken. If a person who is otherwise well-qualified lacks the experiences that I have mentioned, it would be hard, if not impossible, for that individual to make decisions in the best interests of the local public school district.

To listen to some so-called school reformers today, you would think that schools are a black hole with money being poured into them with consistently poor results. I challenge anyone on this committee to visit school districts across the state and tell me that, considering the dearth of resources public schools are given, these schools are not economically well-run. Someone can always find an exception to any rule. I am here to tell you, having been a businessman prior to my career in education, by and large, public schools in Connecticut are some of the most efficient operations that I have experienced, especially considering the vast multitude of things that society is asking of our schools today. I think that it is fundamentally wrong to say that a business management type of superintendent who has not come up through the ranks and had some classroom teaching experience would be able to improve on the system that exists today.

Please strongly consider eliminating Section 33 entirely from Senate Bill 24. Thank you.