



**Testimony before the Education Committee  
Submitted by Sal Luciano, Executive Director, Council 4 AFSCME  
February 21, 2012**

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

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Senate Bill Number 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

My name is Sal Luciano and I serve as Executive Director of Council 4 AFSCME. Our union represents 35,000 Connecticut workers, including non-certified public school personnel such as paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries and nurses.

The employees we represent throughout Connecticut's public schools want many of the things all of us want. They want to see the achievement gap closed. They want to see our schools properly and fairly funded. They want and welcome accountability at all levels. They want to see collective bargaining rights respected.

Above all, they want kids to succeed. Because just like teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, nurses, librarians, grounds crews, security officers and secretaries are invested in successful educational outcomes.

As you proceed with this raised bill, we urge you to make it a vehicle for real and positive change in keeping with Connecticut's progressive ways.

Across the country, we are in the midst of a troubling even tragic phenomenon in the form of sweeping changes to weaken if not obliterate state collective bargaining statutes and school funding provisions. In its extreme form, this is an effort funded by corporations and extremist advocacy groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) to systematically defund and destroy public schools.

Please do not allow education reform to become a fancy catch-phrase for weakening public funding as well as public structures and services.

Our union also asks you to heed recent troubling developments in the charter school movement, which are financed with public money.

According to the New York Times, charter schools are operating in 40 states, yet have inferior outcomes to public schools. A 2009 study from Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes found that 37 percent of charter schools performed worse on student test measures than their traditional counterparts.

Yet fewer of these under-performing schools are being shuttered. This is lose-lose for students and for taxpayers underwriting these misadventures in public education.

This is a watershed moment in Connecticut.

I urge you to empower all the education stakeholders, including non-certified staff, to develop a solution that respects our values and honors our obligation to prepare students for the economic and social challenges ahead.

Thank you very much.

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