

Remarks of: Alison Marshall-Rubin  
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For the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24, Re: Teacher Certification and Tenure  
3/13/2012

Senator Stillman, and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I am an eighth grade language arts (English) teacher in Wilton, CT. I would like to share with you my views on Senate Bill 24 regarding teacher certification and tenure eligibility/renewal.

I have been a classroom teacher for nearly eight years, in which time I underwent and successfully completed the now-defunct BEST program, obtained a Master's degree in English (literature concentration), and successfully completed training to become a TEAM mentor. The school at which I work was recognized by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as a Blue Ribbon School due to the high standards and performance that staff and students alike have demonstrated.

I was insulted on both a personal and professional level by Governor Malloy's comment that in order to receive tenure, "...the only thing you have to do is show up for four years." I interpret Governor Malloy's comments as a derision of both my profession and personal work ethic and feel such a comment reveals the governor's ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation of what tenure is and entails. Connecticut already has one of the longest evaluation periods for teachers in the country. During the untenured portion of my career, I was observed and evaluated several times a year (both by administrators and the assistant superintendent), met with an assigned mentor, and, as mentioned above, successfully completed my BEST portfolio. Every year I have had to establish an annual, measurable classroom goal, approved by my administration, and demonstrate by the year's end my achievement of that goal through data and analysis. Tenure does not guarantee me a permanent position; it simply affords me the right to due process should the question of my continued employment arise.

I feel that the current state requirement that teachers wishing to maintain certification must obtain a Master's degree is a vital one, as it enhances not only our content knowledge but our ability to be classroom teachers. I have adapted many tasks from my graduate coursework successfully in the eighth grade classroom and furthermore, I have gained confidence as an education professional as a result of my advanced degree.

Often state-mandated education reforms are created by people who have no experience teaching in a classroom. Why are teachers rarely consulted about what they do, how they teach, and what type of mentorship and evaluation they would find most beneficial to their professional growth?

We are constantly derided and made into the scapegoats for the state's social and budgetary ills, but rarely are we given a voice at the table where the big decisions about our future (and, by extension, the futures of our students) are made. Collaboration is essential, not only for creating an effective evaluation system, but in maintaining a level of respect that I think teachers have earned.

I respectfully urge you to reject Governor Malloy's proposed Senate Bill 24 in its current form.