

## **Remarks of Beth Hanlon**

*Special Education Teacher  
Norwich School District*

**Before the Education Committee  
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS  
Section(29) - Teacher Tenure**

**February 21, 2012**

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

My name is Beth Hanlon, and I'm a Special Education teacher in Norwich. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 29.

I have taught and lived in Norwich for the past 17 years, and I am a witness to the ever changing society. Norwich is unique in many ways. Some of its uniqueness directly effects the school system. We happen to have two casinos which feed into our district. The employees of these casinos reside in Norwich because Norwich is one of the only surrounding towns that offers rental properties, ultimately resulting in a dwindling tax base. It is true that other towns have effects from the casinos, but tribal members' residency is what those towns experience.

When a school district, such as Norwich, has 36 different languages and cultures within it, then we need to look at them a little differently. To fund them the same as any other urban district doesn't make sense. Our needs are vastly different. To evaluate its teachers and link it to certification and tenure doesn't make sense either. If we are talking about teachers losing tenure due to not having enough proficient ratings, due to factors outside of their control, this could result in a teacher not being able to maintain their certificate. Teachers have about 6 hours daily to effect and reach a student. There are another 18 hours of environmental factors at play here. For some students, school is the only time they are warm, fed, safe, and for some, interacted with. A teacher's failure or success cannot be based on such circumstances, unless we want to hold all professionals to this standard: doctors' pay and credentials are based on the recovery of

their patients, police officers' pay and promotions based on lowering the crime rate, firemen paid based on fire prevention and minimal destruction. I think you get the idea.

When I "show up" to work every day at 7:15 a.m., I encounter teachers who work 10 - 12 hour days. Beyond their time with students, teachers in Norwich are working diligently to prepare for and meet the needs of our students. Weekly, teachers are attending Governance Council meetings, SRBI meetings, grade level meetings, attending workshops, meeting with parents, collaborating, and teacher after school programs to prep students for state mandates. Urban districts are the toughest places to teach in. These teachers play so many roles in one day in the life of their students.

Please strongly consider rejecting section 29 of the governor's education bill. Districts are very aware of their needs and issue. There needs to be collaboration between districts and teachers to develop a plan that not only holds teachers accountable, but does the same for administrators. Recognizing priority districts, for exactly that....in need of being a priority. Needs of students, support for teachers, and administrators need to be a priority. This can only happen if the people already doing the job are at the table focusing on the needs of that district.