

Dear Member of the Education Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Brian Walsh and I would like to take a few minutes to comment on Governor Malloy's Senate Bill 24. As a citizen of the state of Connecticut I am appalled at the recommendations Gov. Malloy is making to reform education.

First, there is a huge misunderstanding in regards to the topic of tenure. Many believe tenure guarantees a teacher a position for "just showing up" to work like Gov. Malloy has stated. This could not be farther from the truth and it is hard to believe that our governor does not understand what tenure entails. Tenure gives teachers who have earned it the right to due process before being terminated. I know of no profession in the private sector where a boss has the right to remove an individual without first identifying the problem and then posing multiple strategies to help the underperforming worker. To move toward a 5 year renewal tenure plan like Gov. Malloy has asked would be detrimental to our educational system. We should be encouraging the best of the best to enter this honorable profession, but this is not the way to do it. Taking rights away from teachers coupled with a low pay scale will not entice top graduates from universities to jump into the classroom.

Next, the topic of linking student achievement to teacher pay is a hot topic in our country today. It is what the state of Florida has instituted some years back and they now have one of the worst educational systems in the nation (58% high school graduation rate). It is ridiculous to think that this plan will increase student achievement. Many people think that teachers are guilty of "teaching to the test" which results in students graduating high school and cannot think critically or problem solve. If Malloy's plan goes through as is, more teachers will teach to the test so that their pay is not harmed. Connecticut will soon end up preparing our students for a life of standardization as opposed to getting them ready for the complex and global world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While on this topic I would like to pose a question: why not link administrator's pay to student achievement? I do not think this is a good idea, but if teachers' pay will be in correlation to student performance, so should the leaders of the building/district. It is the leaders that are in charge, so if there is a problem, shouldn't the leaders be held responsible?

Moving on, teacher evaluations are another main point of Gov. Malloy's senate bill. Teachers like any worker must be constantly evaluated by their superiors and given feedback. Their strengths and areas of weakness should be identified. Once identified, teachers should create goals and action plans to increase their effectiveness. It should be up to the building administrators to determine their effectiveness – not CMT/CAPT scores. This current practice is adequate and administrators need to do a better job evaluating their personnel. Furthermore, the idea that students and parents may have the

right to evaluate a teacher is absolutely scary. How can a parent objectively evaluate a teacher when that person has no educational background and is not in the classroom? How can a child have the power to affect an adult's salary?

Lastly, I would like to discuss how this senate bill will affect students outside of the classroom. I have stated that I believe this bill will have a negative impact on students inside the classroom, but that is only half the story. Currently, teachers are under an incredible amount of pressure to perform and increase student achievement thanks to the awful No Child Left Behind legislation. If Malloy's plan goes through there will be a mass exodus of teachers from the profession. The ones that will stay will dedicate their entire selves to increasing student achievement because their salary is on the line. This will create a culture of high tension and a loss of everything else – no more baseball coach or drama director. Who would want to coach and help build character when they could use that time to make sure their pay will increase for the next year because they have a family at home to take care of?

Students are the real victim in this situation – not the teachers. This senate bill will harm students way more than it will harm teachers and for that reason and no other I urge you to please vote no on Senate Bill 24.

Like teachers you are a public servant and you have the opportunity to make a difference now. Can we reform education and not slap teachers in the face? Can we reform education and keep student interests in mind? I think we can and I know you will do what is best for this great state.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Brian Walsh  
(CT resident and active voter)