

Testimony  
Submitted to the  
Education Committee

February 21, 2012

**SB 24 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**

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

My name is Bruce Douglas, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), which provides extensive educational services, including regional cost-savings programs to the 35 school districts in the Capitol Region. CREC also operates 15 accomplished interdistrict magnet schools in the greater Hartford area.

I am testifying today in reference to portions of the Governor's Bill No. 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

I would like to commend the proposed changes to teacher certification, tenure, evaluation, professional development, and recruitment in the Governor's bill.

With regards to Sections 29 and 30 of the Governor's bill, concerning changes to teacher tenure and enhancements to teacher evaluation systems, I support the good work that has been done so far regarding improving teacher effectiveness. I caution, however, the inclination of our state and country to focus predominantly on teacher evaluation. I contend that our teachers are over-managed and under-led. It is not exclusively our teacher evaluation processes that are flawed.

I expect that if we were to conduct an audit of all the teacher evaluations that were performed in Connecticut each year, we would find that the quality of these was dramatically insufficient. In a minority of cases, we would find that evaluations were never performed. This is not a criticism of our principals, but rather evidence of the inadequate number of trained evaluators in our state. A robust and effective system of teacher evaluation depends on the availability of a sufficient number of quality evaluators to assess, support, and enhance our teacher workforce.

The efficacy of our teacher force is directly correlated with the quality of our school leaders. It is essential that we enhance the focus on leader effectiveness immediately. In order to make sudden and dramatic school improvement, especially in our lowest performing schools and districts, I recommend that you make the selection and training of leaders a very high priority.

I support Section 24 of the Governor's proposal, to create a Connecticut School Leadership Academy. I recommend that a Leadership Board be put in place to provide oversight of the Academy. This Board should be comprised of professionals who have significant experience in the areas of teacher leadership, support, and enhancement and who are able

to provide a body of work that evidences their teacher evaluation skills. This Board will ensure that the Academy is developing and supplying the highest quality leaders possible to our schools.

In addition, we must do an honest review of our traditional administrator training programs. We must ask if they are appropriately preparing our leaders and evaluating their capacity to achieve meaningful teacher and student results. The best administrator training programs in Connecticut teach management skills, rather than how to lead. This has resulted in our professionals confusing leadership with management. As evidence, I encourage you to review our Universities' course requirements for Educational "Leadership" (092) programs. Administrator preparation courses must be profoundly challenging if their graduates are to lead the high quality teachers in Connecticut. We must define the indicators of a body of work that evidences 092 graduates are aptly prepared to expertly set a vision and to motivate and inspire teachers and students to achieve and excel. And then, we must strictly demand that preparation programs prove their graduates have the capacity to be effective school leaders, including imparting the skills to meaningfully evaluate, support, and enhance our teacher workforce.

I provide this recommendation based on my experience working with the leaders of CREC's highly successful and award-winning magnet schools. It is not by chance or accident that CREC's Magnet Schools have achieved remarkable academic results for our economically and racially diverse student population, including in some cases eliminating the achievement gap. Our school leaders implement a deliberate strategy for providing student-centered rigorous instruction and for establishing a comprehensive system of teacher evaluation, support, and enhancement. We expect that all CREC staff members engage in intentional practice, and our school leaders hold themselves and their staff responsible for demonstrating results.

We will not receive equitable or remarkable student outcomes until all of Connecticut's teachers and leaders are held to this standard.

I thank you kind consideration of my recommendations and your continued support for Connecticut's children and families.