

**Remarks of
Christina Lepi
Farmington Teacher**

**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Sections 28 and 29 - Teacher Certification and Tenure**

February 21, 2012

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Christina Lepi, and I'm a teacher in Farmington. I want to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 28 and 29, regarding teacher certification and tenure.

I have been teaching for over 30 years in both private and public schools in Connecticut and have worked with many outstanding teachers. I am currently a National Board Certified Teacher and I believe that the current Connecticut certification process is a thorough and well thought out procedure, giving people the time to see what teaching entails. When I created my portfolio for the National Board Certification, it made me think about what good teaching looks like and how to ensure I was putting my students' best interests first. I completed this after 25 years of teaching and felt it was a very valuable tool for me. I have worked with a dozen student teachers and know that the rigorous process currently in place to certify Connecticut teachers helps ensure quality and understanding of what it means to be a teacher. We need to encourage the brightest people to enter the teaching field. Eliminating the master's degree and requirement for teachers to continue their education after they have entered the classroom, would water down the process, resulting in people truly unprepared for teaching. Other states have modeled their teacher certification program after CT's and we should not change something that works. I have always been proud of the fact that I am a CT certified teacher and hope you will leave the rigorous process in place.

On the side of tenure, I believe many people do not understand that tenure does not mean a job for life; it means that you cannot be let go just to save money in the education budget. If the administrators in any building were doing their job, poor teachers would be identified and removed from the classroom to ensure a quality education for our children. I remember a time when teachers were let go to save a buck and quality went out the door. The idea of keeping a poor teacher is not something I want to see happen. I am a professional teacher and I want us treated with respect, not discarded for a cheaper model. Experience is needed to mentor new teachers and provide the history that helps schools move forward, not backward. If you make the changes without including due process as a part of the package you will be destroying more than you think. If anything, you should be looking at the administration end and require them to stay in the classroom and teach at least one class so they understand what the teachers are dealing with. In many cases, properly enforced school policies would provide more benefits than blaming teachers for the ills of education. I have found that when parents support the teachers, there is a more positive approach by the student to learning. Stop trying to blame teachers for the ills of society and lack of motivation by students. If anything, we should be returning to a

more serious approach when a teacher and their experience are valued. Change in tenure that includes due process is a positive move, removing tenure without that is a crime.

Thank you for reading this and I hope you do the right thing and say no to the Governor's proposed changes.