

Doreen Richardson
Chair, Windsor Board of Education
Testimony on Senate Bill 24
February 21, 2012

Tuesday, February 21, 2012

Good afternoon,

Chairpersons Stillman and Fleischmann and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Doreen Richardson; I am the Chair of the Windsor Board of Education. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Governor Malloy for leading with a bold education reform agenda that seeks to "...restore public education in Connecticut to a position of excellence." I am here today to speak in support of this agenda as proposed in SB24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

Research is quite conclusive as to the impact of high quality teachers in the classroom and of the leadership that provides for and support exemplary teaching and learning. For far too long we have supported policies and practices, enshrined in or protected by statute, that subjugated high quality teaching and learning to a myriad of agendas that sacrificed equity and excellence in student outcomes. Reform in teacher tenure and the performance evaluation of teachers to reflect the purpose of public education is not just timely; it is long overdue.

SB24 sets forth a sensible approach that provides for the hire and retention of our best teachers and recognizing the hard work of our most exceptional teachers. I would urge this Committee to also consider and adopt additional safeguards to this end by amending SB24 to include a requirement that any reduction in force driven by economic constraints be guided by performance rankings, not seniority. I notice some language subjugating/equalizing consideration of seniority to a teacher's qualifications with respect to the proposed Commissioner's Network as articulated in Sec. 18 of the proposed legislation. While this reflects the recognition that guaranteeing employment and preferential status primarily on the basis of time served undermines the goal of excellence, reform of this practice appears to be limited only to employment related to schools and districts that fall within the scope of the proposed Commissioner's Network. I urge this Committee to act boldly and courageously on behalf of our children in this regard – to ensure that across the Connecticut Public School system all policies and

practices that undermine the goal of a high quality teacher in each classroom be abolished forthwith.

It is my profound hope that you will approve this bill and in so doing resist efforts in the name of compromise that will tend to dilute the urgency and effectiveness of this legislation. Thank you for your time, and please pass Senate Bill 24.