

**Remarks of Elizabeth Kennedy
Seventh Grade English Teacher
Danbury Public Schools**

**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Sections 28 and 31
Teacher Certification and Teacher Evaluation**

February 21, 2012

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

My name is Elizabeth Kennedy, and I'm a 7th grade English teacher in Danbury. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 28 and 31.

Since I earned my teaching degree 10 years ago, Connecticut has had the reputation of having the best programs for teacher training. I cannot see any reason to lower those standards now, except as an excuse to lower salaries in a profession that is already underpaid. I am a widowed mother of two with a master's degree and a 6th year certificate, and my annual salary is just barely enough to survive. In addition, raising the GPA of candidates to B+ will not make any difference. It will not even things out and it indicates a misguided point of view of what makes a great teacher. It's not all about having straight A's - it's about having passion for what we do. It's about wanting the kids to do well, not because we're so smart, but because we know they are. Please don't disrespect us by allowing these changes to go through and take our passion away.

In addition, the governor's proposals tie subjective local evaluations by principals to both teachers' certification and renewable tenure.

Districts would have to base salary schedules on the governor's new certification levels, not education and experience as is done now. Moving from one level of certification to the next would be based solely on a principal's evaluation, not taking into account experience or advanced degrees. Experience does count. It counts in the bag of tricks I have to differentiate my instruction. It counts in my ability to understand when a student is having a bad day and help him to learn anyway. It counts in the articles I read, the organizations I belong to, and the books I buy and read to further my professional abilities.

Teachers' ability to hold a license to work in any district would be determined by one person's judgment. The United States was founded on a system of checks and balances, and our educational system deserves nothing less. Those of you serving in the government don't have to please just one person, and neither should we.

Weakening the requirements to become a teacher and reducing the salaries allocated to the profession will not only weaken the status of the profession, but will also cause those who are highly qualified to leave the profession. And that is not in the best interest of children.

I agree that changes need to be made, but urge you to read and consider the teachers' reform plan, *[A View from the Classroom: Proven Ideas for Student Achievement](http://cea.org/viewfromclassroom/)*, (found at <http://cea.org/viewfromclassroom/>) developed by a cross-section of teachers with expertise in the classroom. Let's work together to find a solution that is fair to all involved and will produce the best results.