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Testimony to Education Committee on S.B. 24  
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Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

Senate Bill 24 offers a comprehensive set of reforms that would establish a strong foundation for efforts to guarantee great schools for all of Connecticut's children and ensure a bright economic future for our state. Its proposals draw from research and lessons learned in other states, and will put Connecticut in the position to win much-needed federal dollars and a waiver from some mandates in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation. While ConnCAN is encouraged by many aspects of the bill, we also believe the bill could be improved in several essential areas.

S.B. 24 offers a comprehensive plan to recruit, attract, and develop top talent within our public schools. **The proposals build off the guidelines for teacher and principal evaluation that were developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and approved by the State Board of Education on February 10, 2012.** These guidelines establish the parameters for annual principal and teacher evaluations, and require **45 percent of the evaluations to be based on student achievement outcomes.** These are very promising developments, and we are pleased to see the state embrace such bold guidelines focused on student outcomes.

Research shows that great teachers and principals literally change their students' lives, and that just one ineffective teacher can have lasting negative impact on students. Research also shows that classroom performance is the best predictor of an educator's impact on student achievement, more so than certification, graduate degrees, or years of experience. This proposal takes important steps toward ensuring that all students, especially those with the highest needs, have exceptional teachers and principals. We hope that districts will take advantage of conditional aid and competitive grants to develop new salary and promotion schedules that will allow top teachers and school leaders to accelerate quickly. The proposal also should clarify that any reductions in force must be driven by evaluation results, not just seniority. Finally, the proposal needs to fix binding arbitration, an issue not currently addressed in S.B. 24, by adding students' best interest to the list of priority considerations.

**ConnCAN is encouraged by the inclusion of the following components:**

- Raises the bar for entrance into the teaching profession
- Holds teacher preparation programs accountable for their graduates' performance in the classroom
- Incentivizes high-performing individuals to teach in high-needs districts and improves recruiting of top teachers and leaders
- Streamlines certification process and connects it to classroom performance
- Creates a "master teacher" status to recognize and reward teachers based on their classroom performance, rather than length of time in the classroom
- Replaces irrelevant coursework with meaningful, customized professional development based on evaluation results

- Develops the next generation of school and district leaders by partnering with innovative national organizations that are experts in this field
- Ties the process of earning and sustaining tenure to teachers' classroom performance

**The bill could be strengthened by:**

- Providing districts more flexibility to promote and/or extend the reach of master teachers
- Ending last-in, first-out budget driven layoffs that currently take seniority, not job performance, into account
- Eliminating the master's degree requirement for teachers who get consistent "exemplary" ratings – research shows that advanced degrees are not a reliable predictor of a teacher's ability to impact student achievement
- Fixing binding arbitration: state statute must be changed to include "students' best interests" as a priority consideration to ensure that student interests are a top priority in negotiations and disputes about teacher contracts (for more see <http://tinyurl.com/7l1st9bj>)