

**Remarks of Jeremy Royster
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Westport Public Schools**

**For the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Section 28, Master's Degree Requirement**

February 21, 2012

My name is Jeremy Royster, and I'm a sixth grade teacher in Westport.

I take issue, in particular, with the proposed elimination of the Master's Degree requirement. The only reason for lowering the standards of teacher quality that I can imagine is that widening the pool of teaching candidates is the only way to compensate for the likely drop in applicants following the passing of the other unattractive provisions in the proposed bill.

How can we expect to raise the bar for students while lowering the bar for their teachers? Do we not need to attract candidates of *higher* quality to improve teaching in our schools? And how will we do that with provisions that are likely to simultaneously lower the salaries and security of this once esteemed profession?

I am personally disheartened to learn of the proposed changes and to feel public opinion shift against teachers; so many of whom pour their heart and soul into their work. I'm passionate about teaching because I know that no moment I spend is wasted. There is an inherent lasting value to be found in generations of children passing through my class; in their more compassionate attitudes, their improved performance, or their enhanced self-esteem. When the public sees teachers as "those who can't do"--slackers looking for an easy job with long summer breaks and a generous pension—it is not only misinformed, it's missing the point. Most of us find our often grueling profession so rewarding because our successes don't just benefit us; they benefit the world. And to expect less of teachers than most other professionals now entering the work force (*The New York Times* is describing "The Master's as the New Bachelor's") will only reinforce the mounting public perception that teachers are somehow less professional than their peers.

I ask the Education Committee to reconsider the proposal to eliminate the Master's Degree requirement in Senate Bill 24, Section 28, because we need to keep highly educated people in the profession if we expect to turn out highly educated students, and because the profession cannot afford to lose more respect than it already has if it hopes to attract the best and the brightest young candidates hoping to make a positive change in the world.