

Testimony on Behalf of SB 24

Connecticut Education Committee Members,

My name is Jo-Ann Johnson. I am a parent, educator and concerned citizen of Bloomfield, CT. I am testifying in support of SB 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness.

I want to thank those of you who have proposed and supported this legislation. This is a step in the right direction for our schools, as it elevates the teaching profession, allows for more school accountability, and provides for constructive intervention for the lowest performing schools.

This law would also provide for better teacher evaluations. Currently, many evaluations in place today are conducted on an irregular basis, provide teachers with little to no feedback, and are unclear.

Connecticut needs an evaluation system that will identify and support highly effective teachers.

I know firsthand the importance of having effective teachers in the classroom.

In 1999 I was hired by the City of Hartford for the Pre-K summer program at Barnard Brown School. I worked with children from 2.9 to 4 years old. I wanted to insert some reading and library trips for my students and I was informed that this was against the rules- that reading education started in the 1st grade.

Introducing 4 year olds to reading- is that overly ambitious?

My son was introduced to reading around the same age as my students. His teachers were ambitious, were held to high standards and rose to the occasion. By the time my son entered Kindergarten he was able to read. This early attention from his teacher played an important part in his life. By the time he entered the fifth grade he was able to score one of the highest reading grades in the West Hartford School district. Why? Because he was able to read well, translate the math questions, and work the problem out with time to spare.

My child was given a great opportunity at an early age: a highly effective teacher. Access to great schools and teachers should not solely be an opportunity- it is a right. I know that we can have other students achieve just like my son in every

school, in every district. However, to achieve this we cannot continue to put other interests ahead of the interests of our children.

Great teachers and schools are the keys to success within our communities, state, and nation. We must send a strong message to our most effective teachers: we are with you, we support your hard work, we want you to continue teaching! A quality education will provide every student with an equal opportunity for success in life.

I urge you to support these reforms.