

*Remarks of John Horrigan
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Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 29 & 31
Teacher tenure & teacher salaries

February 21, 2012

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

My name is John Horrigan, and I'm a middle school librarian and teacher in Westport, Connecticut. I am also a member of the CEA Board of Directors representing Fairfield County. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 29 & 31, Teacher tenure and salaries.

As 20+ year veteran teacher I would urge to you not adopt the governor's recommendations on tenure. While I can agree that the current tenure system does require some updating, I can assure you that in Westport there are no teachers who are receiving undue protection by the current CT tenure law. As a local union leader and contract negotiator, I have had the opportunity to work with many teachers, tenured and untenured, who have come under scrutiny from school administration. When school administrators discover a teacher who is not meeting the strict standards of our profession, they will promptly put the teacher on a plan which will insure weekly meetings and progress reports. Once teachers are able to fix any problems with their teaching and demonstrate that they are back at the top of their game, they are taken off the plan. When teachers are unable to meet the requirements set forth, they usually opt to resign with dignity rather than face a lengthy dismissal process. When there are problems with this process it is usually when administrators seem to be targeting a teacher unfairly or without due process.

The governor's proposed changes regarding salary will cause great turmoil within teacher ranks. Teachers have invested great time, effort and resources in obtaining advanced degrees so that they can improve their teaching skills. Are we going to tell teachers who have borrowed money for advanced degrees that these are no important or valued? That the salary increases they had counted on to pay educational loans are off the table?

The governor's proposed bill tells teachers that they would be better served by cultivating relationships with the administrators who will rate them. What will stop districts from establishing quotas of how many teachers will be allowed at any particular level? Cash starved districts across the state will attempt to place experienced and high cost teachers in the lowest possible category to save money. Teachers will no longer feel safe in predicting what their salary will be in any particular year. How can we be expected to manage our bills with such uncertainty? Even if we are consistently rated at the master level, just one new administrator who does not like us will doom us to a lower salary level. Will administrators be rated on how much money they save the district by placing teachers on lower levels? I can go on with the questions I have but I think you get the idea.

This bill will be a profession killer and will make finding quality teachers even harder than it is now. I can't imagine anyone with any other option entering such a fickle job environment. Who would want to make a long-term commitment to teaching our students?

I would like to urge the committee to reject the governor's bill as written and take a closer look at the strong solutions that the CEA has proposed in their document: *A View from the Classroom: Proven Ideas for Student Achievement* released in January.

Thank you for listening to my concerns with this legislation

Sincerely
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