

STATEMENT of Lauren Rosato, Norwalk CT

Issue: Senate Bill 24 – Develop the Very Best Teachers and Principals

Thank you members of the Education Committee. My name is Lauren Rosato and I'm president of the Norwalk Education Foundation (NEF), a co-founder of R.Ed Apples of Norwalk, and a Norwalk public school parent. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 24, a great piece of legislation for Connecticut's future.

I would like to speak about some observations I've made about the public education system in Norwalk.

NEF raises private funds mainly to support teacher quality through technology training. We are grant funded and accountable to the private sector for outcomes.

Each year, we offer upwards of 60 free workshops for technology training, taught by Norwalk teachers, for Norwalk teachers. Yet we often have to cancel workshops because it's not a "deadline" year for technology CEU's (certified education units). This year, we're trying something new to get teachers to attend. Instead of a centralized location for workshops, they'll be at individual schools so teachers don't have to travel. I hope teachers attend regardless if their CEU's are due or not.

I fully support legislation that eliminates CEU's as a measure of teacher quality.

NEF also supports after school programs and we like to hire Norwalk teachers to teach afterschool classes. We have a small budget and we have an unwritten rule with the Norwalk teacher union head that teachers must be paid the base hourly union rate to work with NEF. Last year, we ran an afterschool digital arts program and hired professional artists to teach. We offered Norwalk teachers an hourly rate to voluntarily observe these professionals because we hoped Norwalk teachers would want to improve their teaching skills. But we knew we had to pay them something or they wouldn't come.

A middle school union steward reported NEF was paying \$10/hour less than the base union rate so I got a call from the teacher union head asking me why. I explained that it was because Norwalk teachers weren't teaching, they were voluntarily observing but getting paid \$35/hour which is a lot of money for a small nonprofit.

I believe the bill could be improved by changing binding arbitration to be in the best interest of students. This change would help improve the culture of collective bargaining so that it more clearly emphasizes teacher quality and teacher collaborations that aren't all about money all the time, but about what's best for children.

Speaking as a parent now, my children are in high honors. You'd think I'm very lucky but actually I'm not. I must pay \$70/hour for a private math tutor for one of my high honors children because she often doesn't understand what her high school math teachers are teaching, even when she goes for extra help from them. Interestingly, one 45-minute math session with an engineering graduate from Duke University raised her grade on her next honors math test from a C to an A, and she has maintained A's with this tutor's help in her current honors math class. I am spending \$400/month on a math tutor to teach math differently because some teachers teach the same way they've taught for years, and never

improve their skills. Nor are they properly evaluated and instructed to improve their skills, or let go if they simply are not good teachers.

We need better quality teachers and better quality school administrators for all Connecticut children, especially for low income and minority children because they can't afford the \$70/hour math tutor like I can. ***I fully support school choice, money follows the child, state intervention for failing schools, and revamped tenure laws that are tied to student achievement.***

In closing, I observe that our current public education system is just not structured in the best interest of students, but for adults. You now have an historic opportunity to change this and ***I ask that you find the courage and the political will to do so THIS YEAR. Please pass Senate Bill 24!***

Thank you very much for your time.