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Date: February 18, 2012 1:33:47 PM EST
To: chris.calabrese@cga.ct.gov
Subject: Senate Bill #24

I am writing today to offer my learned opinion regarding proposals for “education reform” contained in Senate Bill #24. As someone who has been involved extensively in testing students for the past thirty years, it is very critical that tests have construct validity and reliability. Currently, the Connecticut Mastery Test has not been proven to have either. Therefore, the State Department of Education cannot state with any certainty what is being measured by this test and if it is reliable. Yet, legislators plan to use results of this unproven instrument to decide teacher competence, overall school performance, and the amount of funding to be provided to school districts. Since your premise for decision making is flawed, all decisions made by using this premise will be inherently flawed if not completely irresponsible. Instead of reforming education, legislators will be deforming education and making the state vulnerable to litigation. I strongly urge you and your fellow legislators to reject the use of the Connecticut Mastery Test as a tool for evaluation of teachers and school districts and for determining funding.

If legislators are truly committed to reducing the achievement gap between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged, they should expand use of educational technology. Through use of technology, classroom teachers have a far greater capacity to differentiate instruction and to reinforce necessary skills. Our state could become a leader in the development and use of educational technology through cooperative efforts between universities, corporations, and local school districts.

I know it is very politically popular to blame teachers and unions for all the problems in education and society in general. However, making them the scapegoats will do nothing to improve education. Our tax dollars would be far better spent on innovation rather than condemnation. Please reject Senate Bill #24.