

***Remarks of Lisa Caldwell
Fourth Grade Teacher
Madison Public Schools***

**For the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Sections 28, 29, 30, 31, 33**

February 21, 2012

My name is Lisa Caldwell, and I'm a fourth grade teacher in Madison.

My job - more importantly - my mission, is to nurture every child's sense of curiosity and desire to learn; to provide our children with the skills necessary to achieve and compete in a global economic and social environment. Educators in our state can successfully accomplish these tasks with objective and fair reforms to education. In Senate Bill 24, Sections 28, 29, 30, 31, and 33 fail to effectively and objectively reform the teacher evaluation, tenure and certification processes. Moreover, these sections of the Bill 24 result in a great disservice to all of our state's professional educators who have worked so hard to earn the privilege to facilitate the learning of every child in his/her charge.

1. Sections 28, 30 and 31 lower the established high standards that teachers meet to maintain their professional status. The bill goes as far as to state that it is unnecessary for out-of-state educators to meet the standard of National Board Certification. Proposals in the bill allow a greater number of inexperienced individuals to teach our children. These sections serve to undercut and damage the value of advanced educational degrees that teachers earn to improve their already strong skills. The move to eliminate provisional certification and CEUs undermines the definition of education itself. As role models for our children we need to aspire to the goals of higher education-the only road to successfully competing in a global atmosphere and to improving the lives of all American children who are educated in our state's public schools.

The existing educational and certification process for teachers is one which features incredibly high standards. I can attest from personal experience that a teacher works extremely hard the first four years and - to paraphrase the unfortunate remark by Governor Malloy - "doesn't just show up for four years." As a TEAM mentor and a Team Coordinating Committee member for my district, I know firsthand the rigorous and demanding process that a Beginning Teacher goes through to earn certification. I also have personal experience as I earned the rewards myself having worked through the BEST evaluative process 11 years ago. The evaluation process during not only first four years but many years thereafter is incredibly demanding and exemplifies the hard work and time we education professionals dedicate to serving our state's children.

Furthermore, the bill establishes unfair evaluation ratings and ties evaluations to salaries – all based on the judgment of one person in the district.

Please allow school districts to develop educator evaluation plans collaboratively with teachers based on strong state standards and implemented consistently with support to help teachers improve and excel.

2. Section 29 regarding tenure weakens due process.

Please reform tenure by requiring due process based on “just cause” which ensures that a neutral hearing officer can issue a binding and timely decision in a termination hearing.

3. Section 33 states that a superintendent would no longer require certification. **Please do not put the appointment of a superintendent in the sole hands of a state commissioner. This advocates an unfair, unprofessional and nonobjective practice.**

Please consider the following in an effort to reform the aforementioned sections of the bill:

- 1) Connect teacher licensing to teacher training and advanced coursework beyond a bachelor’s degree in order to be responsive to the real and changing needs of student learners.
- 2) Ensure the fair and equitable distribution of state aid—critical funding that does not strip public funds from local schools.
- 3) Engage parents by creating innovative and positive ways to increase involvement in schools and reinforce lessons with their children at home.

I am proud to be a teacher and always honored to announce my profession when asked. Many of the proposals in Education Bill 24 not only undermine our profession, but are disrespectful and lower our professional status. Frankly, they seem to be written by an individual who has not spent much time in our state’s fine classrooms. I invite you to come into my classroom and experience the learning and hard work taking place. I am asking you to do the right thing: consider the educator’s point of view – the teacher who works in the classroom and abides by the state’s high standards. Work with us - not against us - to develop reforms that truly and honestly benefit who really matters - our children. Thank you for your time and hard work.