Dear Representative Shaban,

My name is Maureen Bachelder and I have been teaching second grade in Easton for thirty years. I am writing to you regarding the proposed legislation by Dannel Malloy which would affect teacher tenure. I request your support, as an educator, to **make sure that Senate Bill #24 does not pass**. I am pleading with you to consider the impact this bill would have on the many dedicated teachers who impact the lives of our Connecticut children every day.

As a teacher, I fear that this plan, if passed, would have huge detrimental effects on our current educational system. One very harmful aspect of the plan is that it bases teacher tenure in large part on students' success on standardized tests. While I do believe that school systems should strive to maintain educational rigor and excellence in teaching, the details of this plan are problematic for several reasons.

For one, there are several grade levels and subject areas which are not assessed on standardized tests. It would be impossible to fairly evaluate teachers on different criteria if they are all measured in different ways. Also, this plan does not take into account the ways some school districts, such as my district, choose to group students with special needs. In my school, students with special needs are placed in one or two classrooms per grade level to effectively provide services in the least restrictive environment possible. If you were to look simply at the test scores from each classroom, not understanding the grouping of children within each class, it would appear that these one or two teachers at each grade level are less effective due to their lower overall test scores. In reality, those specific teachers have worked even harder throughout the year to differentiate instruction and provide a supportive learning community for many different types of learners.

There are so many other factors that contribute to students' success (diet and consistent meals, home life, medical conditions, and family dynamics, including abuse and neglect) that are out of our control. Unfortunately, there are some districts in Connecticut that face more of these challenges than others. Day after day, teachers strive to provide a balanced and safe environment that combats this. Despite teachers' efforts, these factors continue to undeniably affect students' academic performance. As a result, standardized test scores are not an accurate measure of an educator's effectiveness.

I also fear that using standardized test scores as a percentage of teacher tenure will only contribute to the highly test-driven environment we already see within schools. At a time when our country needs to teach future generations to be intelligent and innovative members of society, we are instead teaching students how to bubble in multiple choice answers and respond to artificial prompts. In some districts, the pressure of these scores may lead to falsifying test results in order to protect job security.

Although some may perceive our education system as one in which teachers get tenure "just by showing up," in reality there is already an effective and rigorous evaluation process in many districts in which teachers are evaluated through multiple observations,

committee participation, curriculum development, professional development pursuits, parent communication, and collaborative teamwork with colleagues.

Another proposal within the plan to grant teachers tenure involves parental and student input. Teachers understand that positive parent-teacher relationships are valuable for the growth of a child, and we strive to foster these at every opportunity; however, I feel that parents should not have the authority to determine if their child's teacher is deserving of a tenure position. In other professional fields, such as medical and legal occupations, clients are not given the right to determine eligibility for licensure or certification. There are too many factors that can affect objectivity in a parent's judgment about a teacher's qualifications.

We all have a common goal. That goal is to provide the highest quality of education to every student. We find it impossible to reach this goal if educators, the pulse of our future, are excluded from the decision-making process. I urge you to **make sure that Senate Bill #24 does not pass** and that your constituents have a voice in keeping Connecticut one of the finest educational systems in America. The future of public education in Connecticut depends on it.

Respectfully,

Maureen Bachelder
Easton Connecticut