

Cindy Mirochine
Danbury Public Schools

Senate Bill 24, Section 28
Teacher Certificate Requirements

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Cindy Mirochine, and I'm a fifth grade teacher in Danbury. I'd like to comment on Senate Bill 24, regarding teacher certification requirements.

Teachers need to be treated as professionals. We work diligently to provide quality education to all our students on a daily basis. One way to stay current in the educational profession is through higher education.

Senate Bill 24 proposes to eliminate the provisional certificate, thus eliminating the requirement for teachers to obtain a Master's degree. In this era of accountability, why would lowering standards for educators be acceptable? When I thought of entering the profession more than 20 years ago, I chose to come to Connecticut from New York to obtain my undergraduate degree from Western Connecticut State University because of the strong teacher preparation program offered.

After being hired in Danbury, I began pursuing a Master's program at Western Connecticut. This was the best "on the job training" I could have asked for as a beginning teacher. I would gather information from my classes, from reading strategies to classroom management tips, and be able to implement them in my classroom immediately. I was able to take creative lessons presented by my college colleagues, and adapt them for my own students. I recall setting up pen pals with another teacher in Redding, and our classes exchanged letters and videos. This was a tremendously positive experience for me and my students, made possible by networking through the pursuit of higher education.

By obtaining my Master's Degree, I was able to grow as an educator, and implement best practices in my classroom. I became better at teaching by sharing information and classroom experiences with others.

Paying for graduate school is a costly expense. Under Senate Bill 24, my advanced degrees and knowledge would not be factored into my compensation. The only factor would be my certification level. Educators are lifelong learners. We are working to prepare students to compete in a world where secondary and advanced degrees are a must entering a competitive workforce. Degrees are held as a sign of accomplishment and expertise. Why would we expect less from teachers, other than to reduce salaries? How will this help attract and retain young teachers, especially in urban districts, such as Danbury?

Teachers should be regarded as trained professionals. I urge the committee to maintain higher education requirements for all educators.