Remarks of Margaret Youmatz
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Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, *Sections 29, 30, and 32*)
(Tenure, Performance Evaluations, and Teacher Retirement)

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischman, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Margaret Youmatz , and I am an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at Rockville High School in Vernon. I am writing today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 29, 30, and 32. I have been a teacher for the past 35 years, and I find the proposals in Governor Molloy's bill, not to mention his recent remarks about tenure to the press, insulting and appalling.

When I started teaching in 1976, my salary was $8,000 annually. Thirty-five years, countless graduate courses and professional development activities, and hundreds upon hundreds of students later, I receive approximately $80,000 annually—not a particularly high salary for a professional with advanced course work and much experience, and significantly lower than many young people fresh out of college who make almost double my salary. Senate Bill 24 may decrease my future earnings and in turn my potential retirement income, something I have worked hard for and contributed a great deal of my salary to these past 35 years.

As a beginning teacher, I certainly did not just show up for four years in order to achieve tenure. I made many personal sacrifices to my profession, giving countless hours outside of my regular work day to lesson preparation, grading, and chaperoning students at school events. As only one example, I missed seeing my own son off to his very first day of kindergarten so that I could be at school to welcome other people's children, youngsters who would become like my own over the course of the school year. All I have of that day is a photo my neighbor was good enough to take for me; I often look at it and think of many similar experiences that I missed with my son because of my commitment to my job. And yet, I made those choices willingly for the betterment of my students and my profession. I watch young teachers today making these same sacrifices and choices, all the while being vilified in the press and by our governor as seat-warmers, scapegoats for a bad economy from which teachers are suffering as well, with wage freezes, furloughs, and cuts to our health benefits.

Tenure is certainly no guarantee of a lifetime job; detailed evaluation instruments are in place to weed out underperforming teachers if only administrators would fully utilize those instruments as intended. Tenure is not even an option for the first four years of a teacher's career, and that length of time is certainly more than enough for administrators to identify those instructors who are not suited to the profession and to

counsel them out of the teaching ranks. Teachers at my end of the pay scale need the protection of tenure, the due process accorded them should the district, bound by budget constraints, seek to find a way to replace a teacher at the top of the salary scale with a beginning teacher at a much lower salary. I will certainly have much to be concerned about if my evaluation is tied to the performance of my students, English Language Learners with varying degrees of English proficiency, on standardized tests devised to assess the academic achievement of native speakers.

In all fairness to Connecticut's teachers, many of whom like me have given and continue to give the better part of their lives to our state's young people, please reject Senate Bill 24 and send a message to Governor Malloy that you support our state's educators and will not allow them to be treated in this disrespectful and injurious manner.