

Dear Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to you today regarding two specific topics addressed in Senate Bill 24, as well as a general response to the anxiety that has been building among your constituents in the teaching profession.

My name is Chris Moore; I am currently a resident of Middletown, and I am now in my fifth year as an English teacher at North Haven High School. I am very fortunate to work at this school, and in fact, I have been able to shrug off outside issues in the past due to my positive experience and sense of mission in my classroom, as well as in my capacity as Student Council co-advisor and Writing Club co-advisor. However, it has become very difficult to do so recently as I have learned more and more about the direction of education reform in Connecticut.

I promise I will keep my remarks brief, and I will write only a concise paragraph about each topic of concern:

**Teacher Evaluations:** Tying evaluations to student performance, especially in the percentages suggested at the state level (45%, half of that based on a standardized test like the CAPT), seems problematic at best, as educators and administrators know (and research shows) that student test scores cannot necessarily be equated with effective or ineffective teaching. This being said, I don't want ineffective, mediocre teachers in education, and I am not suggesting that, as a profession, we should shy away from accountability, but rather reconsider how best to ensure it. In an article from 2006 titled "Rotten Apples," Mr. LeRoy Hay (now serving as Education Associate for the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) is paraphrased as saying, "in this age of No Child Left Behind mandates ... administrators have too much on their plates as it is, and focusing on evaluation processes has fallen." I urge you to support legislation that would cut red tape for administrators and allow them to focus on their most important local responsibilities (including duties such as teacher evaluation) which will have the most direct impact on student learning. The current teacher evaluation plan only allows for 40% input from administrative observations and evaluations, while student performance rockets to the top as a means of data, seemingly an easy fix, as though teaching can or should be assessed on a business model in the same manner as employees' sales numbers. To match student performance with teacher evaluations is to deny the impact of class composition, which varies from year to year, not to mention that some students don't test well, the latter being an experience that Governor Malloy publicly recalled about his own academic experience. If anything, we need an evaluation plan that would encourage teachers to take on struggling students; the governor's reform model may have the opposite effect and ultimately unbalance the positive relationship between teachers and students that lies at the heart of a successful classroom.

**Teacher Tenure:** The concept of five year renewable tenure threatens to create a politically-charged environment, one in which teachers may not be able to advocate for the best educational decisions, particularly not if they are at the end of their tenure term and up for what I can only imagine will feel like reelection. Governor Malloy has been so bold as to claim that to earn tenure "in today's system, basically the

only thing you have to do is show up for four years... The bottom line? Today tenure is too easy to get and too hard to take away." I can tell you that, at least in my experience and that of many others teachers I have spoken to, those first four years are anything but easy. The CEA proposed drastically reducing the requirements of arbitration in cases where tenure should be revoked, which would save money and increase the potency of local administrations. Instead, the rhetoric of Governor Malloy's proposed legislation treats teachers as though they were assets on a sports team, to be traded for when they appear promising and released when their numbers decline; his legislation would redefine tenure as the mark of competitive success, when we know that education is most effective as a collaborative process, between teacher and student as well as teacher and teacher. Most of my best, memorable teachers were lifelong educators, tenured veterans who facilitated my challenging and ultimately inspirational education based on their experience and knowledge. Personally, I have never been more proud of an achievement than I was of tenure; I did not even attend my college graduation, but I proudly display my tenure certificate and am reminded every day of my commitment to live up to it. It is not money, but rather a sense of purpose coupled with a sense of security and affirmation - made possible by tenure - that enables me to strive to meet and/or surpass the rigorous standards of the Common Core, put in any and all necessary extra hours (for extra help, correcting papers, contacting parents, attending school functions, etc.), and speak my mind when necessary without fear of political consequences.

I thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to read this, and I hope that you will consider what I have said as you work on the education committee and vote on Senate Bill 24, as well as future education legislation. I speak today not only for myself but also for a great number of teachers locally and nationally. I have developed my opinions based not only on experience - my own, as well as that of others - but also through reading a great number of articles, research studies, and interviews over the past several years, the links to which I will happily forward to you or your office staff if desired.

If the Connecticut General Assembly finds need for input from teachers in the coming months or years, please consider contacting me, either by phone at (203) 314-3556 or by email at CMooreCT@ymail.com.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Chris Moore  
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