



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE MARY M. MUSHINSKY
EIGHTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4038
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591
HOME: (203) 269-8378
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585
TOLL FREE: 1-800-842-8267
E-mail: Mary.Mushinsky@cga.ct.gov

Ranking Member
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS
COMMITTEE

MEMBER
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Testimony in Support of SB 24, An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness
Before the Education Committee February 21, 2012 1:15 p.m. Rm 1E

As ranking member of Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) and previous chairwoman, I support SB 24 and the necessity of meeting the achievement gap head on.

NEED FOR THE BILL

PRI in December 2009 issued our report concerning the alignment of workforce and education to produce successful CT workers. We found a lack of alignment. The PRI Committee found the state was creating **too many** elementary school teachers, mechanical engineers, attorneys, and realtors for the job openings in those fields in CT. We found the state was creating **too few** industrial engineers, civil engineers, comprehensive special education, math and world language teachers, and physical therapists for the job openings. The engineering school at UConn drew students from around the world but Connecticut students were not well represented. In my town manufacturers advertise \$70,000 jobs in industrial engineering, yet can't find people with the necessary skills to perform these jobs.

PRI found 40% percent of the CT workforce in 2012 would come out of underperforming urban school districts; by 2020 it would grow to one half. The fact that our aging state is so heavily dependent on workers from low performing schools, and that this trend is increasing, spells trouble for the entire state. The need for highly trained workers is especially acute in New England, the section of the country with the finest colleges but the oldest demographics. Our neighbor states are aware of this challenge; Massachusetts in particular has already begun to

aggressively change the curve to improve academic achievement. In comparison to our neighbor states we lag behind, but under the leadership of Gov. Malloy and this Education Committee we are poised to catch up with this bill.

PRI's report noted that CT's highly skilled jobs will require workers with postsecondary degrees or certificates. We showed U.S. students currently compare poorly to their peers in 30 other industrialized countries, and some of these countries are our major economic competitors. PRI reported the state is wasting resources by teaching remedial high school material to our first year college students, especially in the community colleges. There is uneven access to preschool and some students are more ready to learn than others. It is essential to our state's future that we aggressively confront the issue of inadequate education for future jobs.

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

PRI recommended the state must first decide what its higher education system should produce in terms of workforce—that is, perform higher education strategic planning—then reorganize vocational-technical schools governance structure to achieve this strategic plan. Strategic planning is the decision that must take place on a higher level—above those employed by the vocational-technical system. This recommendation is not yet addressed.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

PRI recommended continuing education for teachers be more site based and hands-on. Thank you for including this recommendation in the bill. We also recommended the state reconsider whether a masters degree is required, and this change is also in the bill.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

PRI recommended reciprocity with other states to attract quality teachers especially in fields underrepresented in CT. This change is in the bill.

TEACHER EVALUATION

In my general support of the measure, I wish to note the concerns of professional teachers who have called me to discuss evaluation. These teachers support our goal of reducing the achievement gap but warn of misuse of renewable tenure by administrators who are under pressure to cut costs by replacing higher salaried teachers with recent, cheaper graduates. Evaluation of teachers must have an outside, objective component to protect older, experienced yet more expensive teachers.

TRUANCY

Professional teachers aren't sure they have the support of their administrators on lowering truancy. In some school districts the school does not even disclose the fact that a large portion of the student body is absent—and the best teacher in the world can't teach a student who isn't there. Truancy statistics should be visible and transparent, and school districts should be held accountable to change the truancy curve in a positive direction.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

Finally, some teachers are concerned that student evaluation of teachers may be skewed if the students are adolescents who don't like a particular required subject or have been disciplined. As the committee works on this bill, I hope you will review the experience of New Haven, one municipality that has already established a teacher evaluation system deemed fair by both teachers and administrators.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue of reducing the achievement gap and preparing our young workers to succeed.