

Barbara Davis Testimony for Appropriations Committee Hearing February 21, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, ladies and gentlemen of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for your time.

My name is Barbara Davis, and I am a retired teacher. I taught language arts and literacy at Hartford's A.I. Prince Technical High School. I am testifying today in favor of Governor Malloy's education budget.

During my time at Prince Tech, literacy was a big problem. I often saw incoming 9th graders reading at a 5th grade level. These weren't just kids with a broken vocabulary. Many students didn't realize they could do better; some had never read a book completely and freely admitted it. Most students had not developed a love of reading, in fact the opposite. They enjoyed telling me how much they hated reading. I always replied that they had never found the right book. Students should not be allowed to pass to each higher grade, not having accomplished the requirements of critical thought and comprehension in reading.

I instilled the belief that education is an equalizer in every one of my students. I wanted them to know no matter what, I would help them succeed.

For that to be true for every child, we must change education in Connecticut. The governor's proposal does just that by targeting funding to reforms that work and to our neediest districts.

Alliance Districts are the lowest performing school districts in the state, and they need funding to improve. To obtain that funding, each district must formulate a plan for reform, which sends a clear message to students, parents, educators, and taxpayers that the money will be spent on things that improve student achievement.

Alliance District funds allow for the understanding that many urban schools must provide social and wrap-around services in school, so that their students can be successful. Mental health or poverty should not prevent a child from learning — schools need to provide resources and become integral parts of the communities they serve.

And because educators do not teach in a vacuum, Connecticut's new System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) provides a much-needed layer of accountability to the profession. Every teacher's success affects all teachers in the building. Schools are communities in and of themselves — evaluations are beneficial to all.

A teacher is not just one teacher in an isolated room — they are part of team, working together for a common goal.

Comprehensive, statewide educator evaluations will help provide meaningful professional

development and positively impact how teachers teach, how administrators manage schools, and most importantly how students learn.

We must not forget that this is about children. The proposals you have before you are intended to improve the present and future of every student in Connecticut — particularly those most at risk.

These are common sense approaches, smart approaches, and approaches that we can all be proud of. Please support these reforms and support our schools.

Thank you.