



Frances M. Rabinowitz, Superintendent of Schools
William E. McGraw, Assistant Superintendent
Christopher C. Melillo, Assistant Superintendent

Testimony submitted by: Fran Rabinowitz, Superintendent of Hamden Public Schools,
John Keegan, Hamden Board of Education Chair and Diane Marinaro, President Hamden
Education Association (teachers union)

March 14, 2013

Dear Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann and Members of the Education
Committee,

As Superintendent of Hamden Public Schools, Hamden Board Chair and President of the
Hamden Education Association (teachers' union) we submit this testimony in support of
revised Bill No. 10-97. In particular, we strongly support and advocate for the Bill's
clarification of the timelines applicable to implementation of the new teacher evaluation
plan. We also appreciate and support the Bill's language encouraging collaboration between
all stakeholders in the creation of teacher evaluation plans.

Related to the timeline for implementation, we are not asking to stop the teacher
evaluation process. Rather, we support what the proposed bill accomplishes: allowing
school districts to have until July 1, 2014 to fully implement their plans, at which point
we will have time to pilot our own program, make appropriate changes to ensure
effectiveness, train and calibrate evaluators and provide teacher orientation (so that
everyone fully understands the expectations and evaluative process). This will ensure
that a new plan can be put into practice successfully and with fidelity. It is imperative to
keep in mind that a teacher evaluation plan must be carefully designed and
implemented, since teacher's careers are dependent on the ratings they receive.

Section 1 (b) (1) describes implementing teacher evaluation and support programs that
are developed through mutual agreement of district committees. We do recommend
that the Legislature make clear that Boards of Education should remain part of that
process. This supports our belief in a shared vision and collaboration of efforts in all
that we do in our school district. Because the Hamden Board of Education,
administration and teachers are informed and involved throughout the development of
all our programs and initiatives, we have seen great buy-in and as a result,
improvements in teaching and learning. We also applaud your inclusion of not only
teacher evaluation, but support programs as well. These support programs are essential
in an effective teacher evaluation plan. We are always striving for teaching excellence
and encourage professional growth even among our exemplary teachers.

Furthermore, we are concerned with Section 1 (2) that asks the State Board of Education to establish a model teacher evaluation and support program on or before October 1, 2013. If the State will not approve a model teacher evaluation and support program until that date, it will be impossible for districts to implement their own valid and effective programs beginning in July 2013. In fact, if they were to accept it today, it would still be impossible to effectively implement the plan in the next school year. Please remember all that must happen before a plan can reliably be put into place, including training and calibration of evaluators and providing teacher orientation.

It should also be noted that UCONN's evaluation of the current model have not yet been completed. Recommendations for changes will more than likely occur and districts will be floundering to change their programs based on UCONN's recommendations.

As leaders in the Hamden educational community, we agree wholeheartedly that effective teaching is one of the most critical elements of a sound education. In addition, while we believe that accurate and effective teacher evaluation is needed, it cannot and should not be implemented until the methods and accuracy are validated.

In summary, if a truly valid and reliable teacher evaluation system is the goal, then an extension for implementation is essential. As the Bill describes, including multiple district level stakeholders in the development of teacher evaluation plans will result in greater acceptance and more positive outcomes, and thus, improved teaching and learning.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran M. Rabinowitz
Superintendent of Schools

Diane Marinaro
HEA President

John Keegan
Board Chair