ENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TESTIMONY ON SB 1097

I am writing to express my concerns regarding SB 1097. First, this bill essentially makes the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory topic of bargaining with the bargaining agents for both groups. Secondly SB1097 undermines and significantly weakens the evaluation efforts and plan that was developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC).

Under present statute, the local board of education has final authority over the teacher and principal evaluation system as long as representatives of the bargaining unit involved are consulted prior to a decision being made. Section 1 (b) of the proposed bill, however, removes from the Board of Education this final authority and empowers the professional development and evaluation committee with this authority unless the committee and the Board could not agree. If that is the case, the district would be obligated to implement the state model plan, clearly usurping local control of our schools.

Members of professional development and evaluation committee members, however, have no responsibility for the results achieved by a school system. Only boards of education and the superintendents whom they hire have this responsibility. The bill, then, would give authority over a school system function that is directly related to the results achieved by a school system to a body that has no responsibility for those results.

As a teacher in Wethersfield for nearly 20 years in the 80's and 90's I am very familiar with the 1986 case that holds that teacher evaluation systems are not a mandatory subject of bargaining. SB1097 would also constitute a significant departure from over thirty years accepted and well-served practice

Section 1(a) of the bill would require every district to implement the new evaluation system with every certified professional in the district in 2014-15. There would be no phase in and no resultant opportunity to learn from that experience before we go to full implementation. To avoid this kind of situation, the PEAC reached consensus on a process whereby 2013-14 would be a bridge year during which districts could choose among acceptable phase in options or propose their own. This consensus, while it does not necessarily represent all of the phase in options that I would like to have seen offered, at least recognizes the fact that going to full implementation in every district in the state in any one year with no bridge year before that is a recipe for failure.

I urge you, therefore, not to support SB 1097 as it is presently written and instead, to refer to the PEAC the issues which the bill attempts to address. That body, along with Superintendents state-wide are best equipped to make recommendations regarding implementation schedules, phase in options and decision making processes.

Respectfully submitted,

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Superintendent