

TESTIMONY ON SB 1097

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I have concerns related to provisions of SB 1097, and I write to express those concerns.

First, I am concerned that one provision of this bill will make the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory topic of bargaining with the bargaining agents for both groups.

Under present statute, the local board of education has final authority over teacher and principal evaluation systems with a provision that representatives of the bargaining unit involved are consulted prior to decisions being made. Section 1 (b) of the proposed bill, however, removes from the Board of Education this final authority regarding the system that will be used to evaluate teachers in every school system in the state and places that authority with the professional development and evaluation committee.

Members of professional development and evaluation committee, however, have no direct 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 direct responsibility for those results. Ultimate responsibility for the evaluation of teachers and administrators properly lies with the Board of Education and with the Superintendent whom they hire.

The bill would also constitute a significant departure from over thirty years of history by making moot the 1986 Wethersfield case that holds that teacher evaluation systems are not a mandatory subject of bargaining.

Further, I continue to have concerns about the impact of this new evaluation system on school district not solely related to the implementation time-line but also related to the design of the system and to the guidelines associated with that system. Simply delaying the proposed implementation of the proposed system for a year will do nothing to improve the system and will do little to relieve the ultimate impact on districts as a result of implementing the system.

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. With in put form Superintendents and other educators across the State committed to improving instruction in Connecticut, that body should be well positioned to make recommendations regarding implementation schedules, phase in options and decision making processes.