

TESTIMONY ON SB 1097

Stephen C. Cullinan, Superintendent **Ellington Public Schools**

I speak to express my concern regarding SB 1097 as currently proposed. This legislation, as proposed, has two provisions of serious concern for my administrative team and the members of the Ellington Board of Education. One of the provisions in essence makes the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory subject of bargaining. Another provision substitutes an ineffective implementation plan for the one 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 regarding the system that will be used to evaluate teachers in every school system in the state. That authority would rest with the professional development and evaluation committee unless the committee and the Board could not agree. In that case, the district would be obligated to implement the state model plan. Having spent numerous hours in the evaluation development process, I certainly do not want the Ellington Schools to be forced to adopt the state model.

Members of professional development and evaluation committee 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 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.

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.

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 as recommended by PEAC. PEAC reached consensus on a process whereby 2013-14 would be a bridge year during which districts could choose among acceptable phase in options. I state that I was somewhat disappointed that the PEAC recommendations did not represent all of the phase in options that I would like to have seen offered. However, the PEAC consensus did recognize that moving to full implementation in every district in the state in any one year with no bridge year is a recipe for failure. Failure in this case may not only hinder the benefits anticipated through this legislation but failure may also be a recipe for expensive and unnecessary litigation.

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 is best equipped to make recommendations regarding implementation schedules, phase in options and decision making processes.