

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, members of the committee, and guests.

My name is Michelle Leduke. I am a voter in Willington, Connecticut (53rd District) and I have been an adult education teacher for 21 years.

I am here today to provide my unwavering support for House bill number 5493. The state of Connecticut MUST continue to increase the accessibility of programs that provide contextualized learning opportunities to adults who are looking to enter, re-enter, or advance in the workplace.

In my 21-year career as an adult educator, I have never been a part of a program that allowed me to present such a thorough, effective, and motivating curriculum to students.

We use contextualized learning in our Ibest program. To date, our module-completers have been 100% successful in both improving their basic skills and earning Microsoft Office Specialist certificates.

But let me tell you about last week.

On Wednesday, my assistant director told us about this hearing and I immediately agreed to bring the class here to testify.

During our preparations for today's field trip, these are some of the questions my STUDENTS asked ME.

- What EXACTLY does the bill say?
- What is their definition of contextualized learning?
- Who exactly are we addressing?
- How do we address them?
- How did they get their jobs?
- Why do they want to know what we think?
- Where will we be going?
- How do we begin a speech like this? What should we include?
- How does my speech sound? Does it make sense?
- How should I dress? Is this outfit appropriate?

If you weren't counting those questions, I will tell you that there were thirteen of them. Thirteen questions about civics, American government and professionalism that have little to do with basic academic skills or computer programs. However, our contextualized learning curriculum has developed students who see, care about and know that they are part of the big picture. We didn't have to make them finish the arduous process of remediating their basic skills before they got to tackle topics they knew they needed for employment. We were able to include the college-level vocational piece from the start, giving them credit for being competent adults whose time, knowledge and experience is valued by many, including the legislators of the state of Connecticut.

In 21 years of teaching, I can't tell you how many times I've said, as part of a traditional curriculum, "go to the computers and we will learn about American government." The one question I get from THOSE students?

"Do we have to?"

Please increase Connecticut adults' access to contextualized learning opportunities.

Thank you, I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.