Judiciary Committee
March 20, 2015
SB 1108

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Committee,

I write to you in support of SB 1108, the Zero-Tolerance Safe School Environment Act.

From the perspective of a parent of children in the Newtown public schools and a Newtown Board of Education member, I applaud any effort to prevent the highly disruptive and increasingly prevalent threats to our schools. The costs to the community are significant, both financially and emotionally. I know, because we have had seven potential threats in our schools in the past two and a half years.

For every note or phone call, administrators, police, school security and staff must immediately interrupt what they are doing to assess the level of the threat, and over the long term, investigations can be very time consuming. Clearly, this is why we employ law enforcement and school security. However, the time that our school administrators spend in investigations and communicating with the community is very real and often goes well beyond the school day. It is time that would be better spent on education.

While administrators and teachers try to maintain some sense of normalcy as the school goes into lock-in or lock-down, educational time is lost in many cases. And although some folks may become immune to the noise of these threats, we know all too well in this community how many others can be deeply affected by the influence of previous experiences. This can't help but affect the learning environment.

At one time, I thought of these "phony phone calls" as nuisances, but in the last couple of years, every threat has become far more tangible because of the reality of what is possible. Not only have threats become more palpable, but they have also seem to have grown more frequent.

Finally, when a tragedy occurs, such as that in Newtown, for whatever reason, it becomes a much richer target for future threats. If this doesn't reveal the truly insidious nature of this crime, I don't know what does.

I sincerely thank you for considering this legislation,

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