

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

P.O. Box 4548
Yalesville, CT 06492

Ph: (203) 793-7996
1-800-378-8020
Fx: (203) 793-7943
Web Site: www.svft.ct.aft.org

Testimony of Paul Angelucci
Plumbing and Heating Department Head, Wilcox THS

Raised Bill 323 AN ACT CONCERNING UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Education Committee Public Hearing
March 2, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman, and members of the committee:

My name is Paul Angelucci, and I am the Plumbing and Heating Department Head at Wilcox THS in Meriden. I am here to support passage of SB 323, AN ACT CONCERNING UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES.

Ten years ago, I made the decision to leave my position in a plumbing company to become a teacher in the CTHSS. Though that decision required a financial sacrifice, and while I have never worked harder, I do not question that choice. Working with young people, helping them develop the skills necessary to become successful members of the trade and build middle class lives, has been a very rewarding experience. Yet I was very nearly denied this opportunity just as it started.

I began my career in the CTHSS at Eli Whitney in Hamden. I took over a shop in which there had not been a teacher for several weeks. While most of the students were eager to start learning and working in class, there were a couple of students who did not want to take on the classroom responsibilities. There was an incident with one of those students outside my classroom door one day in my first weeks. I was a brand new teacher at the time, and if a similar situation arose today I would handle it better. It was not a serious incident, but the student then made accusations against me that were completely untrue. I had to defend myself against allegations that were false and malicious, and as a new teacher I had no tenure protection. Fortunately, the CTHSS and my union stood behind me. Those allegations were not substantiated, and I was able to continue my career. In the decade that has followed, there have been no similar accusations.

Though the claims were not substantiated, in my personnel file in Hartford documents regarding the accusations remain. If someone for some reason filed an FOI request on my file, all the documents that referred to the report would be there. What happened to me is not that unusual. Many student complaints generate DCF referrals from

administrators who must follow the protocols. This practice is understandable; our most important responsibility as educators is to keep students safe. There are other teachers in my school who, like me, have faced accusations from students that an investigation proved were false or exaggerated. Those accusations remain as part of their personnel record. When an investigation does not substantiate these claims, why do they remain part of the teacher's record? We work with young people who do not always make thoughtful choices. SB 323 provides teachers closure after these difficult experiences. It protects our reputations from false allegations. It allows us to continue educating children knowing the process works for everyone involved. I want to thank Senator Bartolomeo for proposing this bill, and I want to thank this committee and the legislature for passing it last year. I hope that this year the bill will again pass, but this time be signed by the Governor. It is an important vote of support for our educators.

Thank you.