

Carroll, Rhonda

From: Mike Rinaldi <mike.f.rinaldi@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2016 12:31 PM
To: JudTestimony
Cc: Rep. Simmons, Caroline; Caroline Simmons
Subject: Michael Rinaldi's Testimony in support of H.B. 5400

As requested:

Submitted below is my testimony in support of H.B. 5400. Please know that I intend to deliver the same in person on Wednesday, March 2nd.

I very much appreciate the opportunity.

Sincerely,
Michael Rinaldi

Good afternoon.

I would like to thank state representative Caroline Simmons, Chairman William Tong, Chairman Coleman, Ranking Member Kissel, Ranking Member Rebimbas, and all the honorable members of the judiciary committee for this opportunity to speak in very strong support of House Bill 5400.

My name is Michael Rinaldi. I am a 29 year veteran educator with the Stamford Public schools, however, first and foremost, I am a parent.

Last April we discovered that a Stamford High School teacher, *three times* accused of sexually inappropriate behavior with his students, left our district by way of a *separation agreement* that, *inexplicably*, included a *glowing* letter of recommendation. Shocked and angered that my district would be a part of something so egregious, I decided to speak out against this horrendous practice at our monthly local Board of Education meetings. I soon realized however that what had occurred in Stamford, *at least once*, actually occurs throughout our *entire nation* on a regular basis.

The numbers speak for themselves. Nationwide, *1 in 10* kindergarten through grade 12 students is a victim of educator sexual misconduct.

Visit, *Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct and Exploitation* or *SESAME Inc.* to learn more. Just last month, on February 14th, *USA Today* ran a very comprehensive piece entitled; *Broken Discipline Tracking Systems Let Teachers Flee Troubled Pasts*. This article outlines, *in excruciating detail*, just how endangered our public school students are in the United States.

Thankfully, with the passage in December of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* it is now *mandated* that each state in our country pass legislation to prevent so-called separation agreements that enable predatory educators to continue to harm students.

Now, today, our state has the *distinct opportunity* to *lead* the effort to better protect our children. The passage of Connecticut House Bill 5400 would effectively make it illegal to quote, "*Pass the Trash*". With the passage of House Bill 5400, *no longer* will educators be able to *move with impunity* from *district to district* or *state to state* ready to take up residence in some unsuspecting school, ready, *and very able*, to victimize even more innocent children.

Above all else, our most important responsibility as educators is to protect the students in our charge. With that said, our newly elected Board of Education, lead by our president, Mr. Geoffrey Alswanger, Mr. David Mannis our policy chair and our interim superintendent, Mr. James Connelly are all working together to adopt policy here in Stamford to prohibit this practice. *Thankfully....* Stamford is *now* leading the way for *all* school districts in our state. Connecticut now *has a golden* opportunity to do the very same for our entire nation.

Please protect our children. *Please* pass House Bill 5400 without delay.