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Statement in support of House Bill 5555

Education has been my life's work as I am a retired teacher (37 year career), former Wolcott Teacher of the Year, semifinalist for Connecticut Teacher of the Year, and former member of the Wolcott Board of Education.

Currently the Connecticut State Department of Education is bullying districts with threats of withholding Title I funds and downgrading a district's rating if their participation rate in the state-wide mastery exam falls below 95%. District officials are then telling parents they cannot refuse the tests for their children, even though there is no law that prohibits parents from doing so. This coercion by government agencies is unacceptable.

The groundswell of opposition to these tests is a result of several concerns. The tests have not been validated or piloted to see if they truly measure what they say they do. The tests discriminate against low income students and students with disabilities as well as those who are English language learners. The tests are developmentally inappropriate, especially for our youngest students. How valid is a test that is taken on computer when students have varying degrees of expertise and experience with computers and access to the internet? Furthermore, according to the American Statistical Association, using the results of the tests in the evaluation of teachers is not valid. The purpose of assessment is to inform instruction. These tests do not inform instruction. They do not show what kinds of questions a student has missed. When I was teaching third and fourth grade during the CMT era in the late 1990's, the test results were very detailed and I knew exactly what my students missed so I could adjust my instruction accordingly.

Opposition to this current education policy of test and punish is coming from both the left and right of the political spectrum. There is too much interference from the federal government in education matters that are the business of state and local agencies. The CSDE is marching to the tune of the US Department of Education, when they should be listening to Connecticut's parents and educators. Refusing the test for their children is the best way for parents to effect change in education policy. It did so in New York when more than 200,000 students did not take the test.

The CSDE needs to back off their punishment plan. House Bill 5555 needs to be passed into law.