

To: Education Committee at edtestimony@cga.ct.gov

From: Dr. Jeannette Faber

Date: March 4, 2018

Re: SB 183

Thank you in advance for reading this testimony. I am a public high school English teacher in Fairfield, and I am in my 22nd year of this wonderful but challenging profession.

When I started teaching in 1996, in Milford, I was in the pilot program for the BEST program. We had to meet the requirements of the portfolio, yet we were not being formally evaluated. I remember the inordinate amount of work it was and the undue stress it put on me in my second year of teaching. My portfolio, I still remember, was 100 pages long with accompanying videos and student work. It was insane. Months after submitting it to the state, I received a postcard in the mail addressed as follows: "Dear Participant." It was not even addressed to me. It just thanked me for my participation. No feedback. No accolades. Nothing. Just a postcard.

Two years later, when I began teaching in Fairfield, I accepted my district's invitation to be a BEST mentor despite my terrible experience with the BEST Program. Why? Despite the terrible portfolio experience, *I had a great experience with my mentor* – a woman with whom I am still in touch, still see. A woman who has become like family. And, I still consider her, 22 years later, my mentor. So, though I did not believe in the BEST program, I said "Yes" because I believe in mentoring.

When BEST was changed to TEAM, I was thrilled. Since 2000, I have mentored many new teachers. I am currently a mentor to a new teacher at our alternative high school. Mentoring is critical to helping new teachers navigate their first couple of years.

Research tells us that [teachers without mentors](#) leave the profession much more quickly. We are experiencing a teacher shortage, and [teacher attrition](#) remains a problem that hurts morale in the profession, and it costs systems and states a lot of money. Mentor programs are critical in abating these problems.

I understand that "[Senate Bill 183](#), Section 9 (which is lines 568-779 in the bill), proposes cuts to the TEAM program that would result in inconsistent standards for successful completion of TEAM, and great difficulty for districts in implementing the program" (Branham). So, if you cut the funding and leave it to the towns, you will create the same inequity that the BEST program perpetuated. Wealthier towns may still pay the paltry stipend, but poorer towns won't/can't. It will create greater inequity. We already have great inequity in school funding in CT. We have the largest achievement gap. Teachers leave urban districts more than suburban districts. Cutting mentor-program funding will only exasperate these problems.

Additionally, in my 22 years, I have never seen such long-term and deep budget cuts to education. Hence, it is not even certain that a town like Fairfield will be able to sustain the program on its own.

How much more can the state cut education funding? Connecticut is ranked in the top five to ten in the country [for our public schools](#). Meanwhile, many are fleeing CT due to its budget crisis and cost of living. What keeps a lot of people in CT are the public schools. If we fall behind, CT will sink deeper into the hole we are already in.

Invest in public schools. Invest in mentoring. Invest in Connecticut's future.

Jeannette Faber