

Remarks of  
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To the Education Committee

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My name is Kathryn Firth, and I'm the Performance and Evaluation Specialist and Alternative Education Administrator in Windham Public Schools. I have serious concerns about the proposals in SB 183, Section 9, that pertain to changes in the TEAM program that I hope you'll seriously consider when discussing this bill.

Having been a participant in the BEST program, and a mentor in the TEAM program, I can tell you from experience that there is no comparison, and TEAM has a profound positive impact on new teachers. There are two proposed cuts to TEAM in SB183 that would create great inequities across the state that I want to address.

The first is the elimination of the requirement that all new teachers complete a reflection paper at the end of each module. This is the activity that 'puts all the module work together,' in that teachers concretely explain, with examples, how their practice has changed and the impact it has had on students. We currently expect, and should expect, new teachers to demonstrate that they can clearly explain their thinking through writing, just as we expect our students to do the same. The paper provides consistent accountability for *all* new teachers, and is a major factor in determining successful completion of TEAM, which is the basis for eligibility for the provisional certificate. Without a consistent process and standard across districts, Connecticut could end up with different completion standards, which would be inequitable. When districts recruit and hire teachers from within our state, we need to know that they all met the same standard, in the same manner, as other professions do.

The second is the elimination of the TEAM dashboard that districts currently use. This is the major tool that assures consistency in how TEAM is implemented across districts, again assuring accountability in the same manner for everyone, from the superintendent to the new teacher. If a new teacher leaves one district before completing TEAM, and is hired in another

district, 'moving' the teacher's TEAM work is a smooth process, assuring that nothing falls through the cracks. Having all of the resources and record keeping within one program makes it a lot easier and smoother to use for both teachers and administrators, which saves a great deal of time, and ultimately money, for all. EASTCONN designed and has housed the TEAM dashboard, and has done an outstanding job of responding to teacher and administrator needs in using it, again assuring smooth implementation of the TEAM program. With no state funding for this dashboard (as is happening this year), the financial burden for districts, especially large districts like Windham, of trying to replace it with something else, or perhaps pay EASTCONN for the use of the dashboard, is more than we can and should be expected to handle.

TEAM is one of the most successful programs Connecticut has had in all my years of teaching, and needs to be preserved and supported by the state. Without the consistency that TEAM provides, our standards and support for new teachers can be lost or watered down, which will have a profound impact on districts, teachers, and ultimately our students. I hope you'll seriously consider my perspective, oppose the proposed changes to TEAM in SB183, and work with all stakeholders to devise a workable alternative. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Firth