



Testimony of
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Education Committee
February 26, 2018

***SB 183 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the
Department of Education***

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Mary Yordon and I am the President of the Norwalk Federation of Teachers and a member of CT State Department of Education workgroup to redesign the current TEAM mentor/cooperating teacher training.

I have concerns about section 9 of **SB 183 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education**.

I support the TEAM program overall, and the modules are well designed and follow the development of new teacher skills. I believe the modules and the relationship are important sources of support for new teachers. Without the state support of the program, it will quickly become a compliance exercise. The TEAM program in my district is the only institutional support for classroom instruction specifically for new teachers. The orientation day and new teacher meetings tend to focus on district-wide elements like technology available for grade books.

I don't believe that this program as proposed can be a good meaningful program if I'm reading it correctly. It looks like the districts have to come up with a PDEC-like committee to develop local 3-year plan for new teacher support, and this is supposed to take the place of mentor training, data dash board support, funds for mentors, and guidance.

Another committee where principals and teachers are supposed to come to mutual agreement is ridiculous. There is too much of a power differential. There is a very complicated structure to

create and sustain and no one in my district has the time to set aside for a colossal important task like this. Looking at professional development plans across the state, and the way our evaluation plan here is implemented, we are setting up the same kind of failure. Where everyone pretends that something is happening, but it is not meaningful, and sometimes it is harmful.

The data dashboard is a key part of the TEAM program. Currently, the TEAM system operates without oversight of the building administrators in most respects. The administrators set things in motion by pairing mentors and new teachers, but the work is overseen by a single person who is not an evaluator in that building. The district facilitator here in Norwalk is a teacher who monitors progress district-wide on the data dashboard. This person is in contact when things don't seem to be progressing, and is also contacted by everyone involved with questions, including principals, mentors, and new teachers. Without the data dashboard, this person will have no idea if mentor relationships are serving new teachers well, if meetings are being held, if meaningful mentoring is occurring.

Without the dashboard, I would be concerned that the various elements of the program would tend to revert back to the building administrators who tend to be evaluators. Who else has a bird's eye view of a building? The separation of evaluation and mentoring is important. How do we ensure that this program does not then fall under the power of the building principal, who is also evaluating the new teacher?

I could support the elimination of the papers and meeting logs if there was a way to oversee the work that is being done. The committees in each district will decide on better and worse implementation and we will soon be where we were before the program, with good districts and worse districts.

I think a better solution would be to first fund the TEAM program like it has been done in the past but was cut from the talent line in the State Budget. I would also urge you to wait and see what this newly formed working group created by the State Department of Education comes up with regarding developing the content, the method of delivery, and the materials for a comprehensive training for TEAM.

Thank you.