PA 11-060

SB1104

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school districts or different schools are spending their funds?

JENNIFER ALEXANDER: Right.

REP. LAVIELLE: Thank you very much.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Other questions for the witness? If not, thank you very much for your testimony.

JENNIFER ALEXANDER: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Next on our list is Matt Taylor to be followed by Jeff House, and this is on Senate Bill 1104.

MATTHEW TAYLOR: Good afternoon.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Good afternoon.

MATTHEW TAYLOR: Thank you for allowing me to speak in support of Senate Bill 1104 as principal of Amistad Academy Middle School.

Our students at Amistad who are 98 percent Black and Hispanic and 70 percent free and reduced lunch come to us on average two years below grade level in fifth grade and leave beating state averages by eighth grade. In fact, this year we are the number one school in Connecticut for African American achievement, which brings me to the reason why I'm here with you today.

Great teachers who work really hard close the achievement gap. During my six years as principal of Amistad, teacher certification and compliance has been a major obstacle to creating and maintaining our strongest possible teacher team. My hope today is to introduce three teachers to you whose

certification dilemma highlights our urgent need to pass Bill 1104 in Connecticut.

Clare Byran teaches grade -- 7th grade writing. Last year, Clare's seventh grade writing students, all selected by blind lottery from the city of New Haven, scored at 92 percent proficiency and 72 percent at goal or advanced on the CMT. This compares to 52 percent proficiency and 25 percent goal or advanced in New Haven public schools.

Clare holds a Master's degree in education from the University of Melbourne, Australia, where she specialized in English and earned her English Language Arts grades 7 through 12 certification. She came to us having taught four years.

According to Connecticut standards, Clare is not eligible to teach grades 7 through 12 language arts. To get certified, she needs to take first-year undergraduate courses in math, science and foreign languages.

I would like Clare to lead our writing team next year, but instead, under guidance from the State Department of Education, I'm asked to terminate her.

Another tough case is eighth grade science teacher Lauren Horne. Lauren has a B.A. in astro physics from B.U, a Master's degree in secondary science education from George Washington University. She taught three years of high school science in Washington, D.C., three years of middle school science in Boston. She is now the chair of our science program, the 8th grade chair, and a teacher coach.

According to Connecticut certification

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Other questions for the witness? Senator -- Senator Stillman?

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you. Good afternoon.

DACIA TOLL: Good afternoon.

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SENATOR STILLMAN: I'm sorry I missed the beginning of your testimony, but I have been reading through it, and I don't know whether this might be a second ask on a question, but please bear with me.

In your testimony, you were making some -- three suggested changes, and one of them is that -- I think it's the second one -- that the language be changed to a person providing instruction, pupil services, supervision of instruction or supervision of pupil services as a means to clarify that an administrator who has had requirements waived because of proven effectiveness be allowed to evaluate teachers.

Would you explain that, please?

DACIA TOLL: Yeah. So I took --

SENATOR STILLMAN: I'm trying to read between the lines.

DACIA TOLL: The language about pupil services or supervision of pupil services is quite frankly borrowed from other parts of the education statute. That is not my own original drafting, and what I meant to do simply with that statement was to be comprehensive, and in the same places that is effectively who we require to be certified in schools, so I'm saying for any position that we would require a certification, could we have an alternative

effectiveness standard that would be applied.

So, you could imagine a school social worker, for example. We have people who have Masters in social work, but if they have not actually checked the particular school social work box, they may or may not be eligible.

The far bigger issue for us is our leaders, so the typical way people progress from achievement first into leadership is we take our most effective teachers, and we start giving them if they're interested additional leadership responsibilities and additional leadership training and coaching and development.

And then they advance to be a coach or an academic dean, and they are highly respected by their peers, and are effectively functioning as assistant principals, and they are in teachers' classrooms our expectation is at least once every two weeks and frequently every week, and they're meeting individually with teachers at least once every two weeks and frequently every week.

And, those people we believe and our teachers believe are in the best position to evaluate them, and we have provided extensive norming training on what effective teacher evaluation looks like and how to make it consistent and fair and helpful.

And, unfortunately, because those teachers have not gone through formal principal certification programs and assistant principals in the state are required, actually, to have full principal certification to do teacher evaluation, they are unable to evaluate, so one of the things I said before you came is that we're in a situation where we

have to bring in somebody who just happens to have an 092 certification. Incidentally, they don't even have to work for our organization; they can sort of be anybody in the state with an 092 who could come in and observe teachers. I think it's fair to say they only have to observe them once and write a formal evaluation, and for us, somebody who is a deep believer in ongoing coaching feedback and accountability, there's just a huge disconnect, and we'd like to have these talented people do that work.

SENATOR STILLMAN: How do you define proven effectiveness?

DACIA TOLL: We worked on that for a long time, and we've come up with our own teaching excellence framework, which I'm happy to describe. I think it speaks to the same question that was asked earlier, which is what's the standard that the state should apply.

In our case, we looked at the outcomes we care most about, which is our student achievement and student character, which were two parts of our mission, meaning that we, of course, want high achieving students academically. We also take very seriously our responsibility to be training citizens for the state of Connecticut and for our country, and good people and leaders, and then we focused on two inputs being the quality of your instruction and what you do on a daily basis in the classroom, and then your contributions to the team, knowing that this is what really works, not just effective teachers but effective teams of teachers.

And so we have designed an evaluation framework which has been recognized nationally as very promising as we all struggle with this

that effectively weighs growth on student achievement measures, parent surveys, student surveys, peer surveys and observations of instruction, and together generate the sort of comprehensive teacher effectiveness score. That took us a year with a lot of help from outside consultants as well as a ton of input from our own teachers and leaders.

I would be comfortable -- although I think it's only a partial proxy -- focusing exclusively on growth on student achievement measures. The challenge, of course, as we all know, that data is powerful, but imperfect, and that there are, of course, untested subjects which we care a great deal about and still want highly effective teachers in those spots.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. Just a quick follow-up.

Your evaluation process that you just described, wasn't it just recognized nationally as a model process?

DACIA TOLL: It was on a couple of different places, but probably most helpfully for us, the federal government just gave us money to implement, not just the practices, but also to adjust compensation based on the results of those practices, but in several other forms as well.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So, given that recognition, it would be fair to surmise that a Commissioner of Education in the state of Connecticut could take the evaluative process that you already have in place, could take the sort of summative information that you have at the end of your process and use that for a decision about waiving or not waiving if they so choose

-- excuse me -- if they so chose. Is that fair to say?

DACIA TOLL: It is. I think the challenge I would want to think through with the Committee is that right now, we are not supposed to hire a teacher unless they are certified, so I think this gets back to the probationary status question.

I think in an ideal world we would be given, I would think, two years in part because you really want two years of data. That's what we do, two years of data before we make a determination, a final determination regarding a teacher, and so I do worry even with this statute how we will negotiate the window of time while they're proving effectiveness unless, of course, as it indicates with Jeff and Matt, many of their teachers, they have proven effectiveness in other environments, and then I would hope that would be eligible.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Gotcha. Sounds like a (inaudible).

Other questions from members of the Committee? If not, thank you very much for your testimony and all your good work.

DACIA TOLL: Thank you. I also have our teacher evaluation, one page on it, that I will be happy to share with the Committee as well.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: That would be terrific.

DACIA TOLL: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Well now hear from Rabbi Philip Lazowski followed by Jo Ann Lutz.

PHILIP LAZOWSKI: Good afternoon, members of the

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everyone is running away from the war right now in education, this would be the subject that we should -- it's absolutely unconscionable to think that we don't teach history without teaching this greatest aspect of the Second World War beyond even a war situation, but also about a human experience.

I must tell you that my concern is, like you, that there even are individuals today that may not accept the fact that something like this could have conceivably happen, and that's my worry, that with time there would be more and more attitude to not consider that this event actually occurred.

So, thank you for that. Much appreciated.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for that comment, Senator. Other questions? Hearing none, thank you, Rabbi, for your time and your testimony.

PHILIP LAZOWSKI: Thank you.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Next up is Mary Loftus Levine, and then following her again, utilizing the discretion of the Chairs, we'll hear from Dr. Joe Olzacki, who I understand has a class he must teach shortly.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. I'm Mary Loftus Levine. As you probably know by now, I'm the director of policy and professional practice for the Connecticut Education Association representing 40,000 educators in our strong public schools.

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We've been working collaboratively -- you have my testimony. I'm going to summarize quickly.

We've been working along with the administrators' association, the superintendents' association, all different groups of teacher organizations that represent speech pathologists, literacy teachers, and for the past four years, we've been working to develop with the department new certification regulations that are currently back at the department being re-examined after the Attorney General's Office took a look at them, and we have been very, very involved in this, and we've had lengthy discussions, sometimes very contentious discussions about how high the standards should be for teachers in this state to be allowed to teach, particularly in our most vulnerable populations.

The one thing that every single group supported was having highly qualified and properly certified teachers in our classrooms. The new regulations, we're happy to say, raise standards; they require the very latest extensive course work and practice to assure that not only does someone have content knowledge, which we've seen many times, does not necessarily translate into understanding and actually knowing how to deliver quality instruction to students.

So, we oppose waiving the requirements for certification, and I can assure you that if this bill ever passed, the Commissioner would have a line at his door a mile long with people who have had similar experiences to what you heard today, and although we support those people and work with them constantly, we have one person in our department that does that probably half of her responsibilities, that works with teachers to help them get certified, so we understand how hard it is in this state to get certified, but yet we don't

think you can have it both ways and have high standards for some and not for all.

So, on behalf of our most vulnerable children, we ask that you have an equitable, fair system to certify educators in this state.

We're also here to comment on House Bill 6498, which also attempts to undo -- oh, by the way. Last year's Public Act 10-111 did lower the standards and allow new standards for administrators, a lot of opportunity to allow people to come into administrative and teacher positions from other states, and that was all negotiated, as Representative Fleischmann mentioned, with a massive group of people.

We also oppose the ability to opt out of the teacher retirement system because one isn't certified, particularly for charter school people it seems, and that also was corrected last year in the omnibus education reform act, so we'd like to let that work, and that's our comments.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. First, there's something in your statement that confused me. You talked about not having a standard based on subject area expertise, and that's not what was discussed or contemplated in this bill.

This bill talks about teacher effectiveness, so could you just explain to me why --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't know how you define effectiveness -- how one would define effectiveness.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Well, I think --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: That would open up a huge definition because you would have some

districts which would define it very, very differently than others, and that has been a problem. It would be like not having certification or having people who didn't pass the bar say, well, you know what; you make a great litigator, and you didn't pass the bar? Well, you can still litigate in our courts.

So, we think that we have to have common standards and common high standards for all educators, not just for those in public schools.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So, in this state we have all sorts of tests that --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Yes.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: -- many of which are in place pursuant to federal statutes that were enacted several years ago, and some of which were in place before then, and those allow us to follow student academic growth.

Would you say that following student academic growth is a fair way to evaluate teacher effectiveness?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I think it's one of many ways. I don't think it should be the sole way because there are so many factors, and the tests that were designed to measure student growth were never designed empirically to measure teacher growth, and so most of the studies that one can read caution, particularly legislators, against buying into the simple concept that a test score reflects whether a teacher is effective or not because there are so many other factors that contribute to that test score at that one time, one shot, one day at one moment, and I'm not sure it even measures student growth that

effectively.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Is it your testimony, then, that the State Commissioner of Education could not be entrusted to gauge whether or not a teacher had proven his or her effectiveness in the state of Connecticut?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: If you want one person to decide case by case by case whether or not someone is effective, I think that would be very dangerous in our scheme of things, yes.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So, we heard stories about four or five different individuals in testimony recently. Do you think it would be dangerous for those people to continue teaching in our schools?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't know what their stories are and I don't have any --

REP. FLEISCHMANN: The stories were just told while you were in this room. I'm just asking you do you think it would be dangerous for them to continue teaching in Connecticut?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't want to comment on that. I'm not here to judge them.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: You just stated that. You talked about a danger to our children, so I'm asking --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: No. You asked me about the Commissioner. You said do you think it would be dangerous if one person unilaterally made a decision about whether a teacher was effective, which would imply that we don't need certification standards for all teachers that are quite complicated, have very high standards, and they consider a multitude of

factors. That was what I answered.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: So, are certification standards generally based upon meeting various educational criteria, right? The person who gets certified has to go ahead and take a certain amount of course work and then pass certain praxis exams. Is that correct?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: It goes far beyond that. For example, the new standards require two student teaching experiences. It's not, as one of the previous speakers stated, just seat time. You have to have practicums; you have to participate in CEU professional development; you have to do many, many things in order to maintain your certification and to even get certified to begin with, so it isn't just seat time in course work.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Okay. And for teachers who have satisfied all the criteria that you laid out, are you aware of any data that you could show us that shows a correlation between satisfying those criteria and helping children to learn?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I could fine some, I'm sure, for you if you wished. I'd be happy to do that.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: That would be helpful because we had testimony indicating that there's no correlation, and if there is no correlation, then it would be hard for me to see why we wouldn't offer a waiver, but if there is a correlation, then I could see the case being made, so I'd be interested to see such (inaudible).

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Okay.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Other questions from members of

the Committee? Senator Stillman followed by Representative Davis -- Representative Davis followed by Senator Stillman.

REP. DAVIS: Earlier in his testimony, Commissioner mentioned that he's supporting a plan to require a mathematics examination for -- as part of the certification process for elementary school teachers.

Now, you've indicated that you've been working on these regulations over a long period of time.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Uh-huh.

REP. DAVIS: Were you aware that that was going to be done, and how do you feel about it?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I actually -- I was not here for his testimony, but someone who was told me that the actual reason, which I'm not sure the Commissioner knows, for the change is because the educational testing service is no longer offering the elementary test that includes the mathematic piece, and so, therefore, since the test is no longer available, the department is seeking a change to find a new test, and I don't -- I think that's really the reason why, but I don't know if he knows that or what the department's discussions have been because I haven't been privy to those. I just happen to know that about what's going on with ETS.

REP. DAVIS: All right. Now, here's -- that must lead to a follow-up question. Why did they discontinue the test? Did they feel it wasn't --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I have no idea why.

REP. DAVIS: Okay.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't know.

REP. DAVIS: I asked him if there was any statistics, any information that would indicate that our elementary school teachers are not proficient in math and that's affecting what our students are doing in the classroom, and I -- do you know of any information that --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't know. I don't have any data from the department anywhere on it, no. I just know that there's a big emphasis on making sure that people who are in our elementary schools particularly have subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogy, and that that's the general push in the country to raise standards for all teachers and to make sure that they -- that everyone is properly certified and qualified to do their job, and that if anything, we're raising standards, not lowering them.

REP. DAVIS: Okay. So, I'm reading into the statement that you have a tendency to support the direction that this takes us.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Absolutely. I think that we need -- we need to be assured that before someone gets hired, that they have a basic understanding of what they're getting themselves into and that, you know, we shouldn't have to wait a couple of years to see how they work out, and then say, oh, gee, you know. At least, we have some assurances when someone comes in with a certificate that they have met a minimal amount of standards, and in this case,they're going to be meeting much, much higher standards if and when the new reg's ever make it through the process.

REP. DAVIS: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Senator Stillman?

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Good afternoon.

SENATOR STILLMAN: You know, I've been listening to this discussion. Certainly, I've had some meetings with folks about how this issue around the charter schools -- I know you know that charter schools were formed with an understanding that there would be a little more freedom so-to-speak in terms of where they are, and obviously they have to meet a basic curriculum, but even the teachers themselves -- but one thing that I've been thinking about as we were trying to address these issues of, you know, higher standards for teachers and having opportunities for folks who are not teachers who might like to be teachers but didn't go through the process, the formal process that certified teachers have.

What can we do to give -- to have them share their breadth of knowledge, et cetera, but we're in such trying times for teachers in general. Teachers are losing their jobs due to the economy, et cetera. I'm very concerned that we're going to lose some very good teachers in the public schools because of the economy, the fact that populations have shifted, schools are closing, towns are laying off teachers because they can't afford -- they're looking -- they're cutting their budgets, let's put it that way.

Do you see this as an opportunity for some of

our certified teachers to move out of the public -- the traditional public school system and into charter schools, and do you have any idea how we can -- what can be done to try and facilitate that?

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I haven't really thought about it other than I don't -- when I heard other testimony, what didn't resonate is the fact that last year we lost a little over, I believe, I think around 800 positions in the state as far as layoffs or reductions in force or elimination of positions, so -- and if you look at the demographics that are coming through on our elementary population, for example, in many places there is declining enrollment, and the bubble is going into the high school levels, and you can see that in the projections in the district budgets.

So, if there is no teacher shortage and one wished to remain in the teaching profession, I suppose that would be an individual choice for one to apply to work in a charter school which would alleviate the need to, you know, change or waive certification. So, I think that would be something that perhaps people would want to explore.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you. I appreciate that. I'm trying to see what we can do to help those teachers who are no longer employed.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Another thing, Senator Stillman. Last year, as I pointed out, there was an alternate route created in the new legislation for administrators. I believe that if you held certification in another state, I believe it was four years, that you had to have taught or held it, that you could come into Connecticut, so we did very much open up the border, so-to-speak, for people to

come into Connecticut both as teachers and as administrators, so those opportunities do exist.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you for reminding us of that. I think we changed that a couple of years ago --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: And again last year.

SENATOR STILLMAN: That was a request that I had made of the Committee Chairs because my daughter moved here from New York after teaching for almost ten years as a certified administrator in New York, and she had to start all over again to become certified in Connecticut, and it was just a travesty the number of people we may have lost that are very good teachers, so, you know, she went through the process, so let me make it clear. None of this benefited her. It just proved the point to me that we needed to look at the process again and understand that we have an extremely mobile society today, and we could lose out on having some wonderful teachers in the classroom.

Thank you.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Thank you.

SENATOR STILLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Other questions from members of the Committee? If not, there's just one follow-up because I'm puzzled. I'm trying to put this together.

From the sound of it, it seems like your testimony is that certification is a protection for children in the classroom, right; that you're making sure that there is

someone who meets a certain base line standard is at the front of the class. There's a school in the city of Hartford that, unfortunately, has no children who reached the proficiency standard in reading last year, zero. It's been a troubled school for a long time.

Every teacher in that school is certified; every administrator in that school is certified; and, every student in that school is failing. So, I guess I'm wondering what kind of a protection certification is offering to those children and why it is that in these schools that are clearly demonstrating major academic gains for their children, we should not contemplate a waiver.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Number one, I cannot speak for Hartford. We do not represent Hartford. I do not know anything about that school or any of the conditions that might contribute to the statistics that you quote.

Number two, I believe that we -- our position is that we believe certification standards must be established, they must be flexible as we believe we have made them, that they will become more like -- they'll be measuring broader things, they will be less focused on seat time, and that if we want to eliminate certification as a policy in this state for individuals and allow people to come into the profession, then that's a policy decision that I guess the legislature is going to have to make.

We believe that certification is but one standard that is put into place and that it alone isn't going to raise test scores, but certainly if we allowed people to come in who we were not assured had met any standards that

were common throughout the state, as we do for every other profession from a hair dresser to a doctor, then, you know, do we want certification standards for teachers, and we believe that yes, in order to run a public school system that we should have standards that everyone must follow.

And, I don't know if that answers your question, but that's our position.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Well, sort of. I mean there was a little dodge there because you don't represent Hartford, but we know --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't. I don't know anything about that school.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: -- that there's schools in Bridgeport -- we know there's schools in Bridgeport that have precisely the same problems --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Every kid's failing? I don't think I know of any school where every student is failing.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Okay. But, we know that there's schools with significant problems in Bridgeport --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: Yes --

REP. FLEISCHMANN: -- which are represented by --

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: -- for a number of reasons besides certification.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Sure. The state of Massachusetts has charter schools in which, I believe, no teachers are required to be certified, and I believe NEA is active in the

state of Massachusetts, and I think the way it works is certification standards are what they are for the public schools in general, but the charter schools have an exemption on the basis of the fact that they're sort of experimental schools that are seeking to do things differently.

So, I'm just wondering what it is that would lead you to recommend that we follow a path so different from that in Massachusetts, given that their charter schools have achieved success.

MARY LOFTUS LEVINE: I don't know if the teachers in Massachusetts, particularly the NTA supported that. I could check on that. I don't know what their position was, but I can only speak for what our position is.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you. Any other questions? If not, thank you very much for your time and your patience with questions.

We inadvertently skipped past Jo Ann Lutz. Is she still here? It's her chance at the microphone, and then Dr. Joe Olzacki.

JO ANN LUTZ: Yes, thank you. I forgive you for skipping me because the Rabbi's testimony was very hard to follow. Mine is not nearly as moving, so good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the Committee. My name is Jo Lutz, and I am the director of the Connecticut Charter School Network. I'd like to testify in favor of Bill 1104, An Act Concerning Charter Schools.

This bill grants authority to the Commissioner to waive requirements for teacher certification if a charter school can otherwise show the effectiveness of a teacher.

We think this is a common sense addition to the statute which upholds both freedom and accountability, and these are the foundation stones of charter school governance.

The ability to staff our schools in a manner consistent with our individual mission has been a key to our success, and we thank the Committee for recognizing its importance.

We also recognize that in exchange for this flexibility, we must be able to deliver a high caliber of education, and there must be meaningful oversight in that process.

I'd also like to speak briefly to Bill Number 6498, An Act Concerning School Districts. It proposes an amendment which would require charters to be granted only within available appropriations, and we feel strongly that charter applications should be judged solely on their quality and not on whether they are submitted within a favorable budget year.

We see no advantage and significant drawback to applying the restriction to the application process seeing that it is already understood that they will only be funded within available appropriations.

Another section of Bill 6498 speaks to bond funding for building projects and debt retirement for charter schools, and we realize the state's need to protect itself from obligations it can't afford over the next two years, but we don't see a need to do it legislatively in this way. We also wonder what will be the fate of bond funds already approved, already approved but not released.

For instance, Isaac School, which is outperforming its host district, New London,

they had to refinance their building loan when the committed funds did not materialize, and in the meantime, they continue to make payments and accumulate interest and delay important renovations.

Another delayed measure is the complete listing of the enrollment cap, a temporary -- and a temporary reinstitution of an 85-student per grade cap. This is extremely problematic since we already have schools which have exceeded this cap in the meantime.

And, lastly, I'd like to point out that if all schools in Connecticut including charters were part of one sensible, integrated funding system that focused on education rather than on education delivery systems, none of these regressive measures would be needed to try to contain costs which, again, we realize is paramount in this budget cycle.

So, thank you all for your time and attention.

REP. FLEISCHMANN: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions for the witness? If not, thank you.

And, as mentioned before, Dr. Joe Olzacki has a teaching commitment, so he'll be going next, and then also in recognition of people's time constraints, following him will be Mara Whitman to be followed by Peggy Roell.

JOSEPH A. OLZACKI: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Joseph Olzacki, and I'm director of visual and performing arts for the Bloomfield public schools.

I am here to testify in support of House Bill 6499 as a minor revision. I believe that this is a first step that, hopefully, leads to a

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Education Committee Public Hearing – March 7, 2011

Testimony by Dacia Toll, President of Achievement First

Good afternoon, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Stillman and members of the Education Committee meeting. My name is Dacia Toll, and I am the President of Achievement First, which supports four public charter schools in the state of Connecticut – Amistad and Elm City in New Haven, Achievement First Hartford, and Achievement First Bridgeport – collectively serving 2,500 Connecticut students. The schools Achievement First operates are amongst only a handful in the entire state where low-income, minority students selected by lottery are out-performing state averages on achievement tests – providing powerful examples that our state's vexing achievement gap can, in fact, be closed. I am here today to speak enthusiastically in favor of Senate Bill 1104 and to propose three amendments for you to consider that I believe would clarify and strengthen the language.

First, let me be clear that this bill in no way lowers the standards for educators in Connecticut – in fact, in a powerful way, it actually raises the standard to what we know our students need and deserve – it provides them with an effective teacher, not simply a teacher who has put in the required seat time in school of education courses. At Achievement First, we greatly value teacher effectiveness – in fact, we believe the success of our schools and our scholars is the direct result of the priority we have placed on recruiting, developing, evaluating, celebrating, and retaining effective teachers and leaders. In fact, we have received national recognition for many of these practices, including recently being awarded a very competitive grant by the U.S. Department of Education based on our teacher evaluation practices and being selected by the Aspen Institute as one of two best practices for their urban superintendents group.

Unfortunately, we have found the current state certification regulations to be a real challenge and to not be a sound proxy for teacher effectiveness. Dr. Tom Kane and other researchers from Harvard's Graduate School of Education have actually studied this exact question and, in two separate papers, cite "a growing body of research" that suggests "certification of teachers bears little relationship to teacher effectiveness," as measured by impacts on students' achievement.[1]

Currently, state law requires that 100% of teachers in a charter school be certified under Connecticut regulations. We have found that teachers with years of successful experience in

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[1] *Evidence from New York City* was published in March 2006 and followed a month later by *Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job*. "There are effective certified teachers and there are ineffective certified teachers; similarly, there are effective uncertified teachers and ineffective uncertified teachers," the authors of *Identifying Effective Teachers* write. "The differences between the stronger teachers and the weaker teachers only become clear once teachers have been in the classroom for a couple of years." This is why we are advocating against pre-employment certification compliance and arguing in favor of evaluating actual teacher performance after several years on the job – which is precisely what Kane and other researchers recommend.

another state or country are in a number of circumstances forced by the State of CT to take basic education graduate courses and, in some cases, even undergraduate courses. For AF teachers and instructional staff, these requirements for unnecessary coursework come on top of participating in AF's extended day and year, and taking part in AF's extensive, required teacher training and evaluation programs. Over the years, we have worked hard to come into compliance with this law, and many of our teachers and leaders have spent considerable time and money on additional coursework that added little to their effectiveness but got them the required piece of paper. Unfortunately, we still have some very effective teachers and leaders that are being told that they need to meet requirements they cannot meet, including in some cases being asked to return to school full-time in order to comply – and neither they nor their students can afford to lose them from the classroom. If they fail to comply, we are being told by the State Department of Education that we need to fire them. We are in an untenable situation, and we are grateful that the Committee is considering a more rational alternative. The loss of high quality teachers and leaders would have a significant negative impact on the academic success of AF's Connecticut students.

It is notable that this proposal is restricted only to charter schools. The core of the charter model has often been characterized as increased flexibility in exchange for increased accountability – an explicit acknowledgement on the part of the state that these innovative schools should be freed from some regulation to show if better results are possible with new paradigms. We are more than willing to be accountable for outcomes. However, Connecticut's current law does not provide any flexibility on certification. As a point of comparison, Massachusetts, which has on most national assessments the highest-performing traditional and charter schools in the country, does not require any charter school staff to be certified. New York, Illinois, North Carolina, and many other states require only a portion of a charter school's staff to be certified. Several other states allow a charter to apply for a waiver of certification requirements.

As someone who has worked a great deal on this issue, I would ask that the Committee support the spirit of this bill and consider three amendments to the current proposed language.

- First, the current language includes a "good cause" standard. I am not sure what was intended by this standard, but I do worry that it will be subject to considerable administrative discretion. I believe the intention of the bill drafters was to allow for highly effective teachers to teach in Connecticut, and I would recommend that the standard for a waiver be limited to that.
- Second, the current language speaks only to effective teachers. Unfortunately, the challenges we have faced getting talented educators certified in the state extend to school leaders and other school personnel. For example, we have promoted a number of our most talented teachers to become Academic Deans (effectively assistant principals), and we have provided them with considerable training and support so that they can serve as outstanding coaches for our teachers. We have also had these Deans evaluating the teachers they coach, which is increasingly seen as a best practice in education – and it has certainly worked for us in terms of both student achievement and teacher satisfaction. However, again, we are being told by the State Department that these Academic Deans do not possess the relevant administrative

certification to provide this support to teachers. I would ask that the Committee expand the language in the current bill to prioritize effectiveness in every position that we have working with our students – "a person providing instruction, pupil services, supervision of instruction or supervision of pupil services" – and to clarify that an administrator who has had requirements waived because of proven effectiveness be allowed to evaluate teachers.

- Third, all charter school staff in certified positions are eligible to participate in the Teacher's Retirement Board program, and we would want to make sure that any teacher who received a waiver for effectiveness would not be penalized with respect to his or her retirement.

Thank you for considering this bill and my suggestions. Without some flexibility on certification regulations, we are at serious risk of compromising the very practices that have made our schools work so powerfully for students. Our students in Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven need the best possible teachers we can find for them, and we are grateful that this Committee is considering ways to help us continue to do right by them.

Achievement First

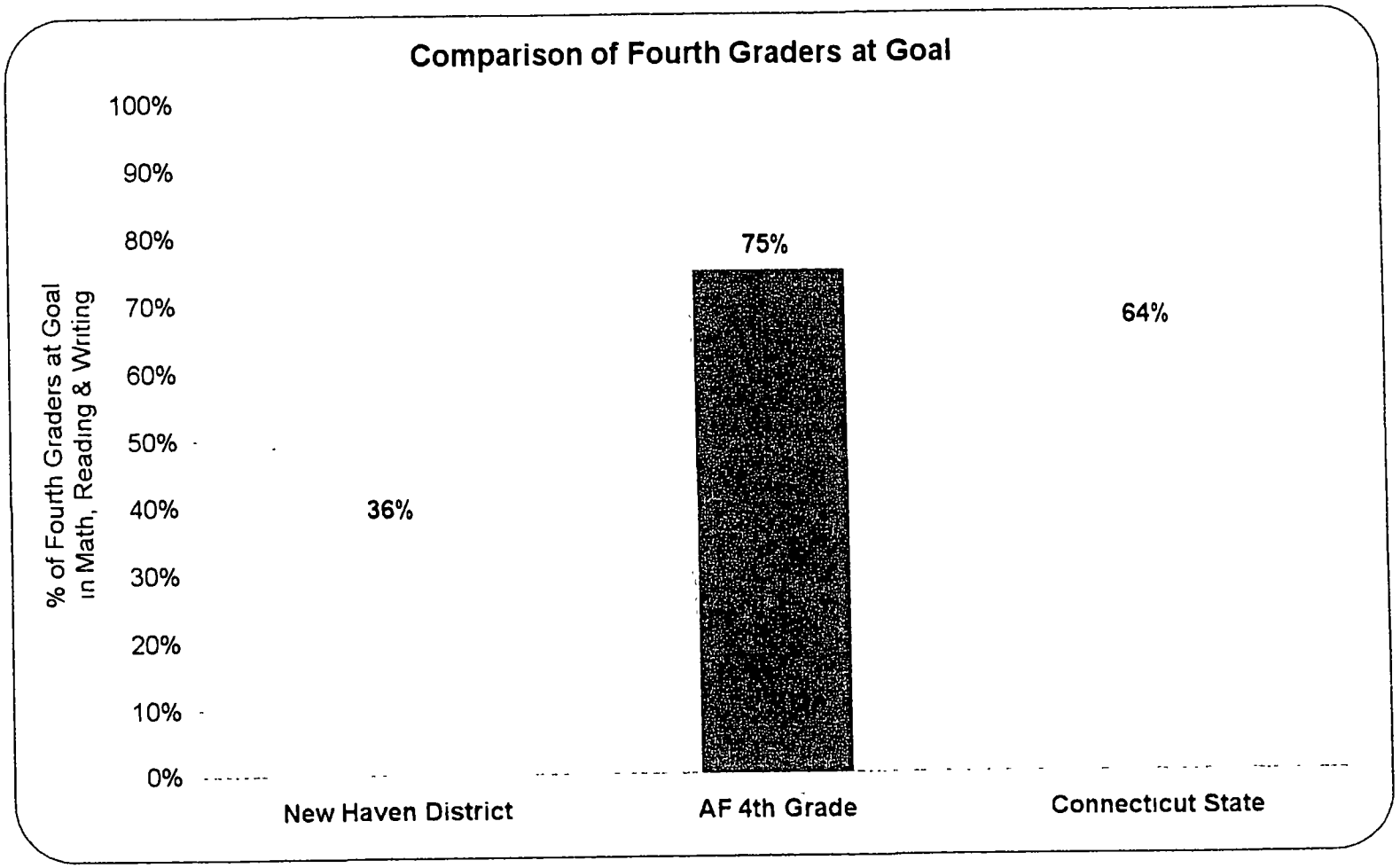
College-Preparatory Public Charter Schools

Achievement First – CT

Student Achievement Results Summary

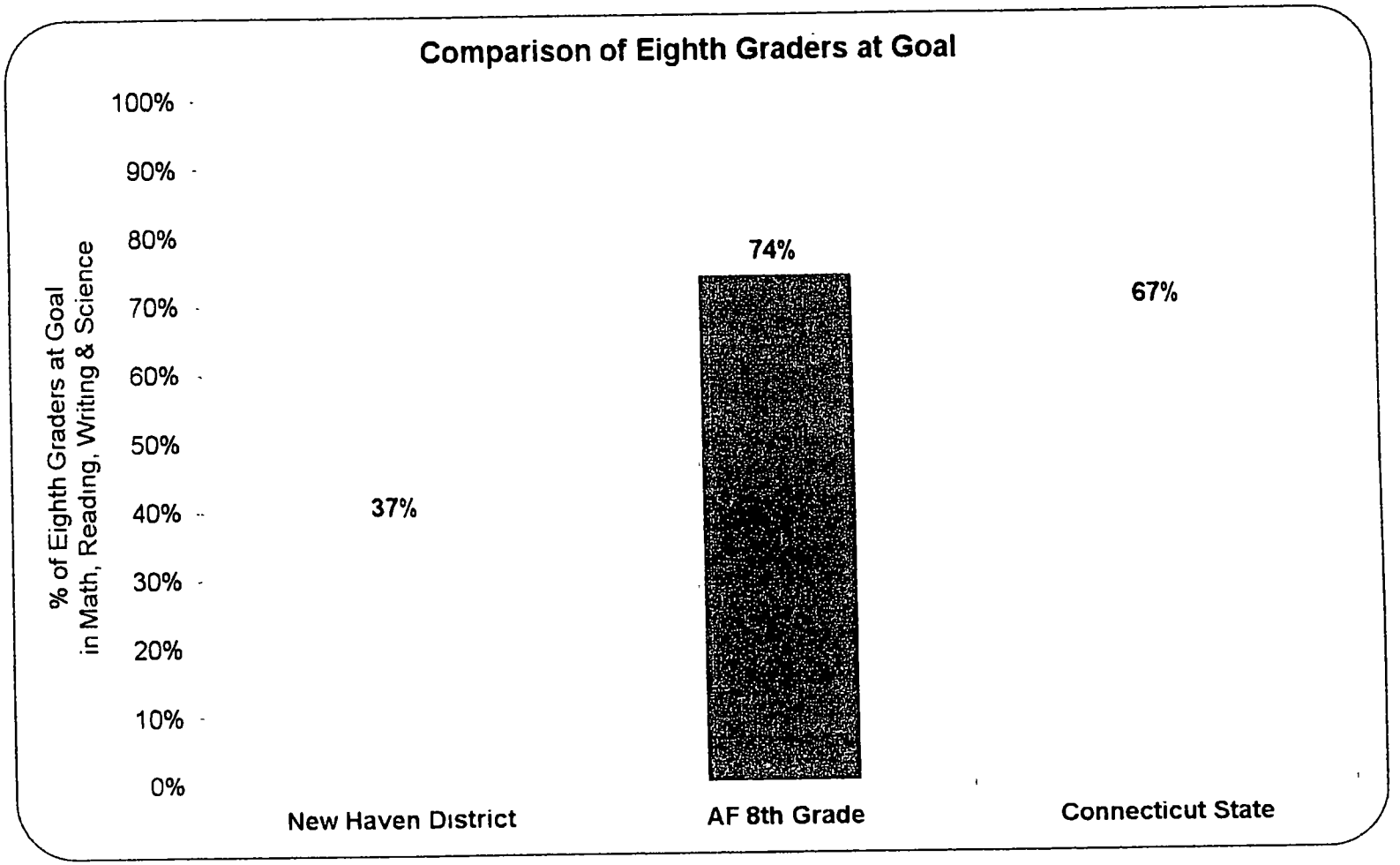
Bridgeport, CT • Brooklyn, NY • Hartford, CT • New Haven, CT

AF Elementary School Performance

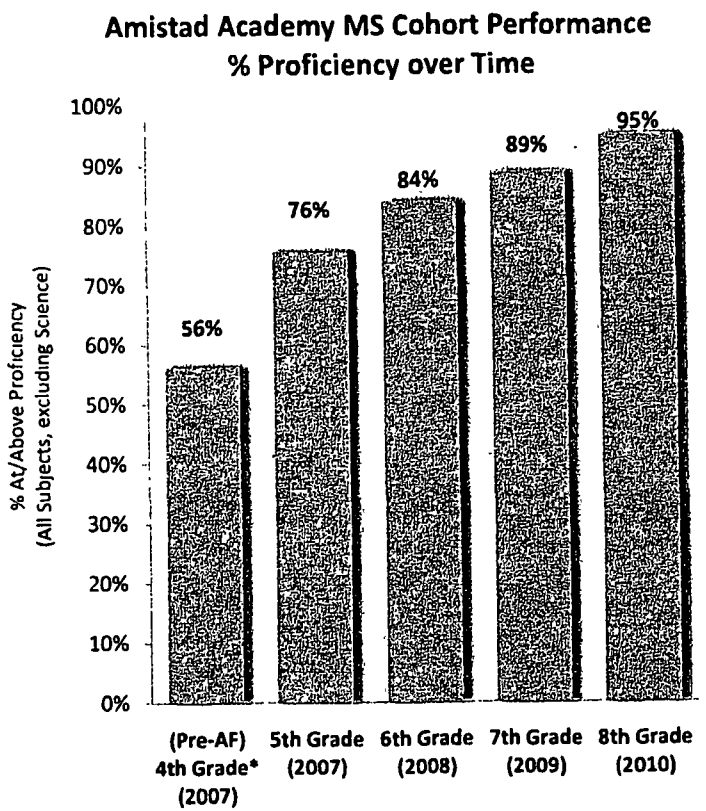


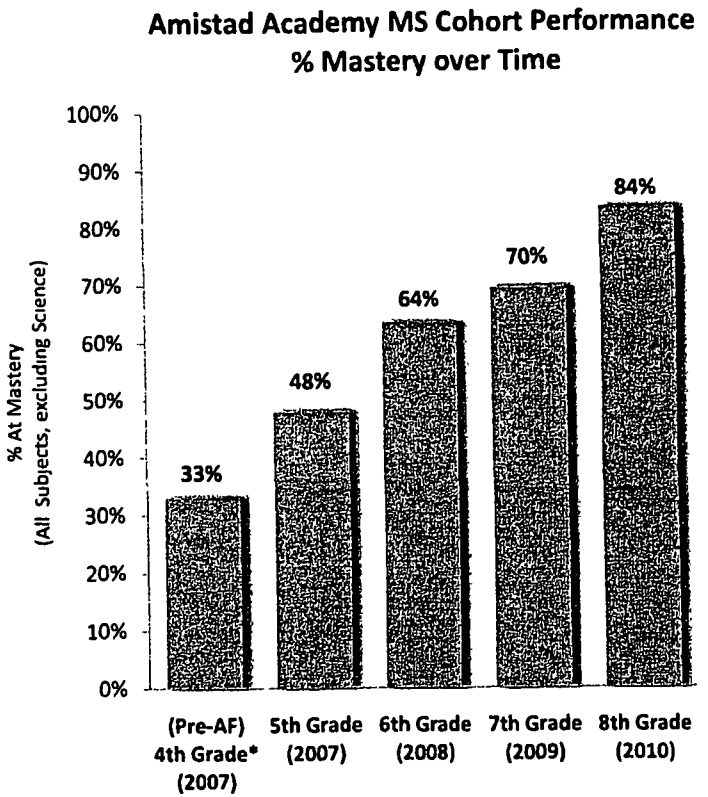
Achievement First

AF Middle School Performance



Amistad Academy MS – 8th Grade Cohort





*Note Pre-AF Scores were not available prior to 2007 As a proxy, the Pre-AF 4th grade scores of Amistad MS 7th Graders have been used.

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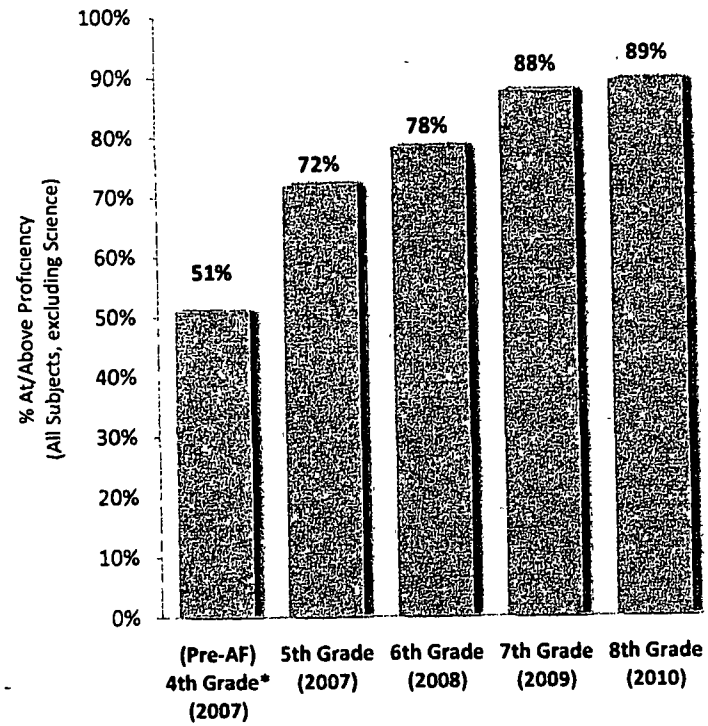
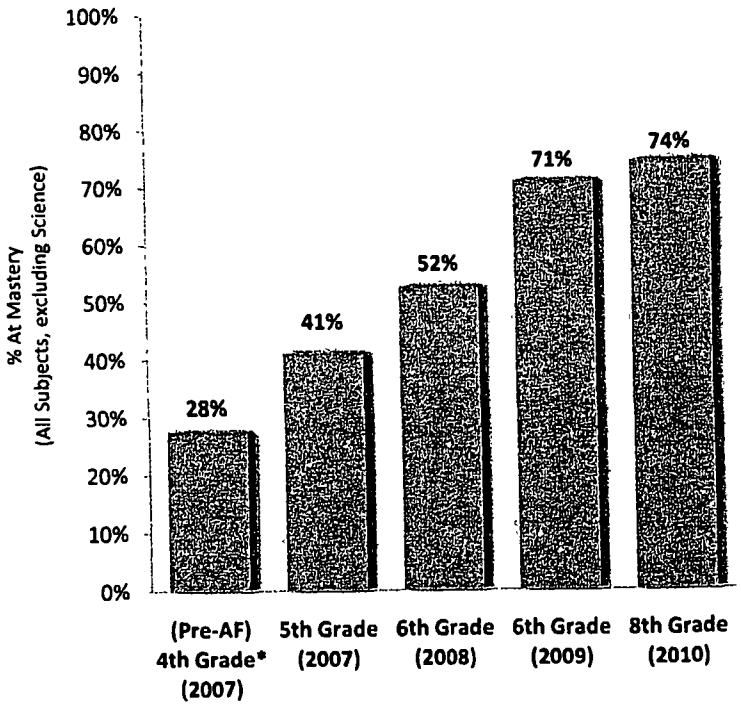
001106

Elm City MS – 8th Grade Cohort





*Note: Pre-AF Scores were not available prior to 2007 As a proxy, the Pre-AF 4th grade scores of Elm City MS 7th Graders have been used

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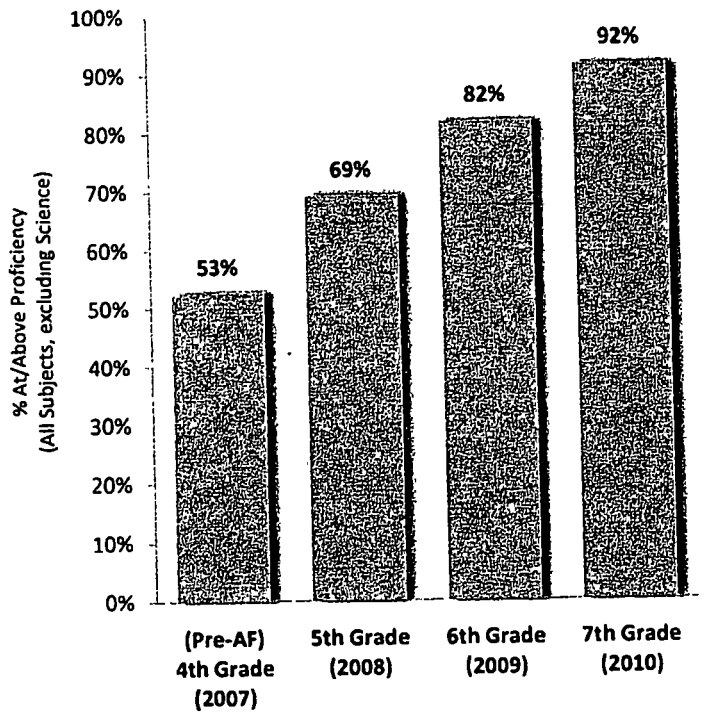
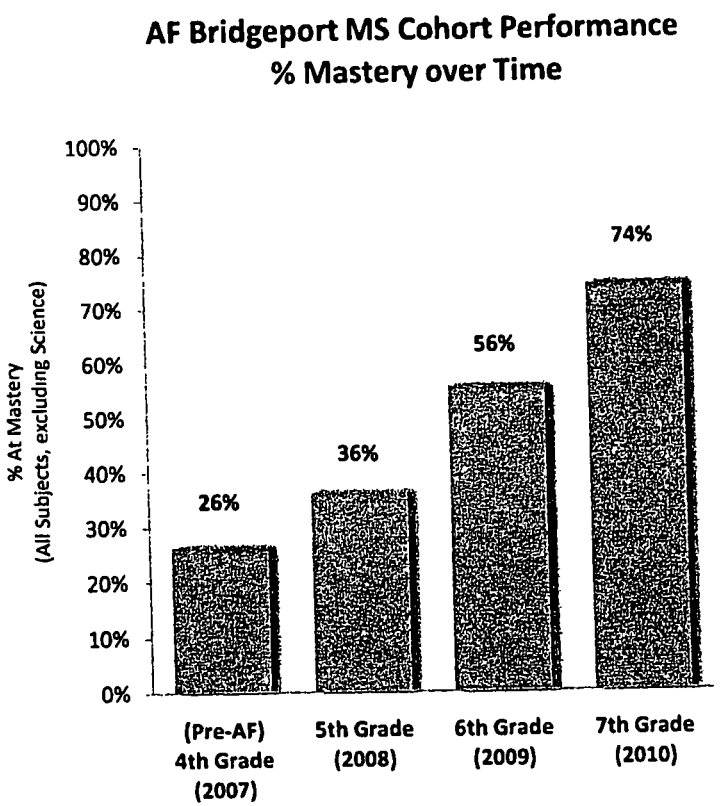
001107

AF Bridgeport – 7th Grade Cohort (Oldest Students)





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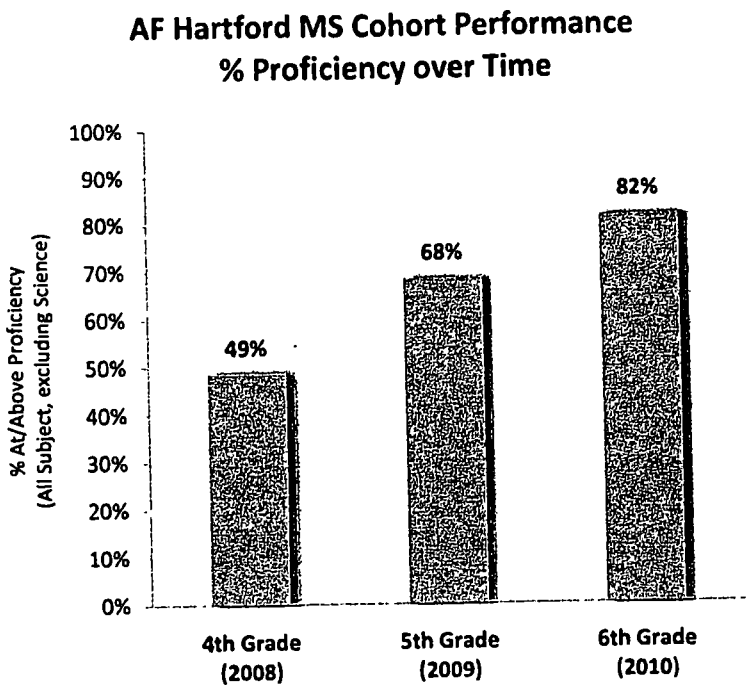
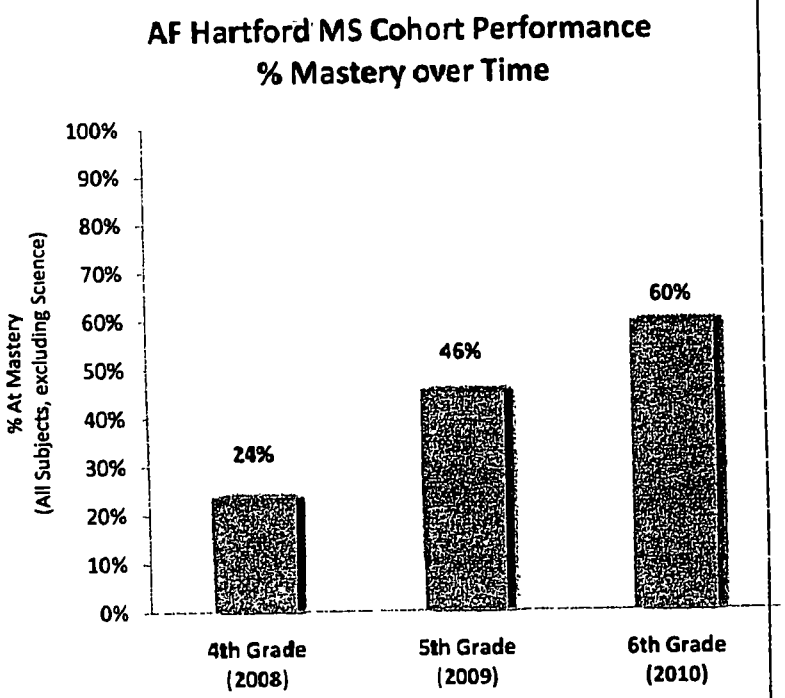
AF Hartford – 6th Grade Cohort (Oldest Students)





Achievement First

001109

CEA
Advocating for teachers and public education

Connecticut Education Association

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Sheila Cohen, Vice President
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Testimony of

Mary Loftus Levine, Director of Policy and Professional Practice
Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Education Committee

Re: S.B. No. 1104 "An Act Concerning Charter Schools"
and
H.B. No. 6498 "An Act Concerning School Districts"

March 7, 2011

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. I am Mary Loftus Levine, Director of Policy and Professional Practice for the Connecticut Education Association, representing 40,000 educators in our strong public schools.

The State Department of Education has spent well over four years developing, vetting, and issuing new educator certification regulations. These regulations are currently being re-examined by the department, per the suggestion of the Attorney General's office. Educator stakeholder groups, including CEA, were actively involved in this lengthy and sometimes contentious process.

But the one absolute we all support is having higher qualified and properly certified teachers in our classrooms. These new regulations raise standards, requiring the latest extensive coursework and practice to assure not only that each teacher has content knowledge, but also understands and actually knows how to deliver highly qualified instruction.

As educators, we oppose waiving the requirements that S.B. No. 1106 attempts to accomplish. Charter schools were granted lower standards, waiver language, and new alternate routes to certification which just took effect July, 1. When and where does this end? SB 1104

On behalf of one of our most vulnerable populations of students which charter schools currently serve, we ask that you stand up for equity and the high standards you demand of our public schools educators for all children, and reject this latest proposal in favor of good public policy.

- over -

Achievement First
Hartford Academy Middle School

March 7, 2011

It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon to address members of the Education Committee supporting Raised Bill 1104. My name is Jeff House, and I am the principal of Achievement First Hartford Academy. We currently serve grades 5 – 7, with an enrollment of about 250 students, selected by lottery from the North End of Hartford. 98% of our students are African-American or Hispanic; 85% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Before they reached our school, only 24% of our current 7th grade students scored at or above Goal on the CMTs – 24% is an appalling #, but sadly it is also typical for students in the North End of Hartford. After less than one year in our school, 46% of this same cohort of students scored at or above Goal in March 2009. In March 2010, as 6th graders, 60% of them scored at or above Goal. I am confident that these students, who are now in 7th grade, will score even higher this month on the 2011 CMTs. And I'm sure that by the time they take the test as 8th graders they will be surpassing state averages and even creating a "reverse Achievement Gap." I am proud to say that our school is an example of an urban public school that really works.

I am really pleased that Raised Bill 1104 addresses the issue of teacher certification and embraces measures of teacher effectiveness over pure compliance, especially in the charter school context where we are all supposed to be willing to try innovative practices in the interest of students. However, I would like to ask that the Committee consider expanding this flexibility to include all school staff, including school leaders. I offer up my own story as evidence of the need for additional flexibility. I did not come to be a school principal by the traditional path. I started as a community organizer in Los Angeles, California, working to organize residents of low income neighborhoods to improve their communities. While we did some good work, I did not see life fundamentally changing for the people in the communities that I served: they remained trapped in a cycle of poverty by their inability to compete for any but the lowest-paying jobs. I came to the conclusion that education was the best way, and perhaps the only way, to break the cycle of urban poverty. I became a teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District. My students' came to me with achievement levels in reading and math that were consistently in the lowest quartile on national standardized tests. I struggled initially like all new teachers, but I stuck with teaching in L.A. for six years and, in my final three years, more than 90% of my students moved from being in the bottom quartile to being in the top quartile on the Stanford 9 achievement test. In 2004, I moved to Boston, and I found a job as a 6th grade math teacher at the Edward W. Brooke Charter School, a school serving a similar population of underserved urban kids on the wrong side of the Achievement Gap. While working there, my 6th grade math students posted the highest results of any students in the city of Boston.

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T 860 695 6760 F 860 722 8805
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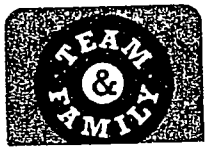
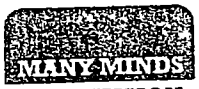




After three years at the school, I became the assistant principal overseeing the 5th and 6th grades. I played an integral role in helping Edward W. Brooke Charter School advance on a course to become a truly exemplary school. This past year, Edward W. Brooke's 7th and 8th graders outperformed their peers at all other schools in the entire state of Massachusetts. This is a school serving low income, minority students in Boston, taking in students by blind lottery, and it is the highest achieving middle school in the entire state of Massachusetts.

In Massachusetts and in a number of other states, charter school teachers and leaders are not required to be certified, so I was able to serve in these roles and have a big impact – but without certification. My wife is originally from Connecticut, and we decided to move here in 2007 to raise our family. I was fortunate to find Achievement First and spent a year training as a principal intern at Amistad Academy in New Haven. Between my experiences in Boston and in New Haven, I believe I was well prepared to found and lead Achievement First Hartford Academy.

Unfortunately, the Connecticut Department of Education does not share this view. For the past several years, I have tried persistently to become certified as a teacher in Connecticut and have been denied. I have passed the relevant tests, and I have the relevant experience and teacher certification in other states, but this state won't issue me a license to teach, let alone lead a school. Because I can't get certified as a Connecticut teacher, I can't even begin the process of applying for administrative certification. How can it be that, based on student outcomes, I was among the most effective teachers in California and Massachusetts and I helped to lead one of Massachusetts most effective schools, but according to the Department of Education, I am not qualified to be a teacher or leader in this state?

My struggles with the certification process are not unique. At Achievement First Hartford Academy, we have a music teacher with a PhD in Music Performance, who is licensed to teach music in Massachusetts, but who has been denied Connecticut certification. In a twist of bleak humor, the CT Department of Education has told this teacher that he must go back to school and take a particular college course to be eligible for CT certification – and this course happens to be a course that he actually *taught* while serving as a grad student at the University of Michigan. To provide a second example, we have another teacher who is certified for grades K – 6 but taught 7th and 8th grade mathematics at the Watkinson School, one of the most prestigious private schools in the Hartford area. She is a smart, talented teacher who works wonderfully with the kids at our school, and she would be the perfect candidate for the hard-to-fill 8th grade math

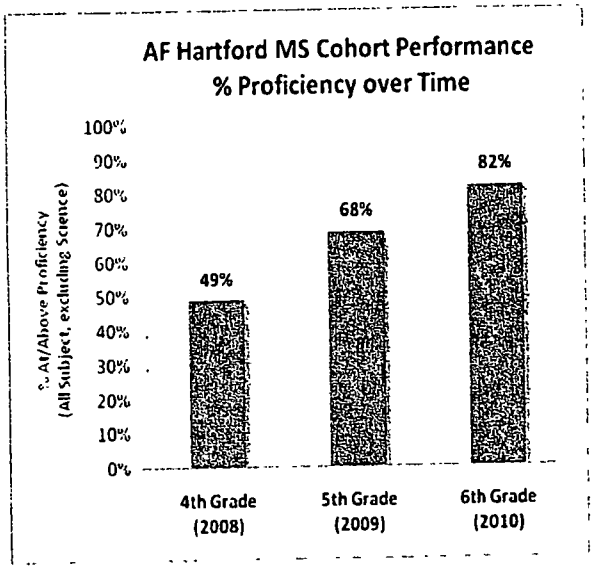
teacher position I have open for next year – but the Department of Education says she is not "qualified" for this position.

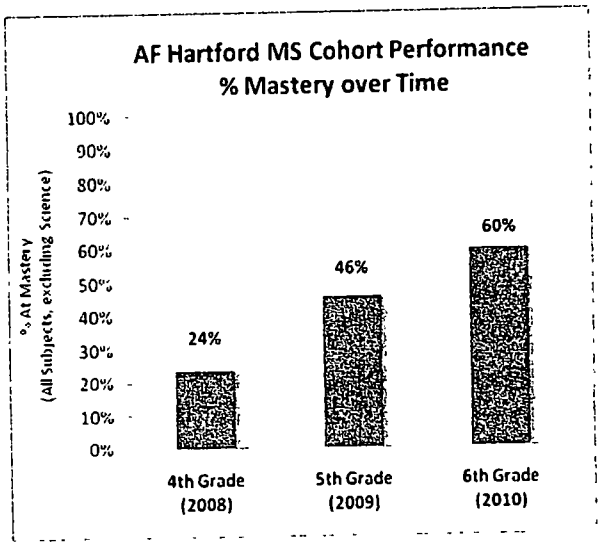
And now I come to my most compelling story about why teacher certification regulations must be reformed. Kendra Salvador is among the very best teachers at our school. Last year, 94% of our 6th graders scored Proficient, and 68% scored at or above Goal, on the math portion of the CMT. These numbers mean that our students, from the North End of Hartford, who two years ago scored less than 25% at goal, are now outscoring their peers across the state. We recruited her to our school because she wanted to relocate to this area, and she came highly Ms. Salvador after great success as a Teach for America Corps member in California, where she was fully certified. For the past two years, Ms. Salvador has been trying in vain to become certified in Connecticut. While others debate about how we might close the Achievement Gap, Ms. Salvador is closing it. The Department of Education sends our school threatening letters about what will happen to our school if we don't dismiss Ms. Salvador and a handful of other teachers who are struggling to get in compliance. Ms. Salvador is the model of the kind of teacher we need more of in urban schools. She is the kind of teacher we want to recruit, develop and retain if we really care about closing the Achievement Gap for Connecticut kids. She is the kind of teacher who can truly change kids' life outcomes. And the Department of Education thinks we should *fire* her.

Why is the Department of Education labeling teachers like Ms. Salvador and myself as unqualified and working to ensure we are removed from the positions that allow us to help kids? Shouldn't we instead be recognized and encouraged for our work toward closing the Achievement Gap? Shouldn't the Department of Education be taking an interest in our success with low income urban students and looking for ways to replicate it? At the very least, just allow us to continue doing this work. The propose Act Concerning Charter Schools, repealing and replacing section 10-66dd of the general statutes, would allow us, and others like us, to carry on.

Sincerely,

Jeff House
Principal
Achievement First Hartford Academy
jeffhouse@achievementfirst.org
Direct Phone: 860 817 4266


AF Hartford MS Cohort Performance
% Proficiency over Time
% At/Above Proficiency
(All Subject, excluding Science)
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
49%
68%
82%
4th Grade
(2008)
5th Grade
(2009)
6th Grade
(2010)


AF Hartford MS Cohort Performance
% Mastery over Time
% At Mastery
(All Subjects, excluding Science)
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
24%
46%
60%
4th Grade
(2008)
5th Grade
(2009)
6th Grade
(2010)

Jessica Malaykhan, Achievement First,
Education Committee Hearing, March 7, 2011

Good evening Members of the Education Committee.

My name is Jessica Malaykhan, and my daughter Hannah has been a student at Achievement First Hartford Middle School since fifth grade. Hannah is now a 7th-grader and she and I are both strong supporters of the school. I apologize that work has prevented me from attending the committee hearing in person; I attended the Appropriations Committee hearing last week and I wanted to make sure you knew my thoughts about the school, its principal and its teachers.

It is hard to say what we appreciate most about Achievement First. Hannah and I both know that her teachers care about her, and that they have high expectations for her. She knows that college is not an option but a given because of the environment the school has created for her. I know that I am truly a partner in Hannah's education, because the school involves me in her learning and progress.

I am a strong believer in Achievement First for all these reasons, but I am most thankful for the dedication of her teachers and her principal. Hannah has excelled because of them and sets high goals for herself with their support. She looks forward to going to school each day because she knows everyone in that building will help her achieve her dreams. They are the best teachers she has had as long as she has been in school, and it shows in her performance and her academic outcomes.

I'm not sure which of her teachers are certified, and honestly I am not concerned. Their certification has not changed the way they teach, the way they care or the way they commit to my daughter every day. Bill 1104 would allow great teachers to keep doing what they do – educating children like Hannah and ensuring their futures are as bright as possible.

Hartford is a choice district, so students are chosen for Achievement First by blind lottery. Last year, more families chose Achievement First than any other school. Like me, those families did not ask about teacher certification. They only wanted to know that when they entrusted their children to the school that it would be a place that would nurture their children and equip them with the tools they need to accomplish any goal.

Achievement First consistently demonstrates its ability to close the achievement gap and deliver on its promise to children. Why not honor those feats instead of thwarting them? Please support Bill 1104 – our families are counting on you.

Thank you.

Testimony for the Education Committee Regarding Senate Bill 1104

Matthew Taylor
Principal, Amistad Academy Middle School

Good Morning. I would like to begin by thanking the members of the education committee for allowing me to speak in support of Senate Bill 1104. It is an honor to be part of this work, and to stand before you today as the Principal of the most passionate, committed and talented faculty of educators that I have ever seen. We are all very proud of the successes of our scholars over the last twelve years at Amistad Academy. Our students – who are 98% black and Hispanic and 70% free and reduced lunch – come to us, on average, two years below grade level in fifth grade. However, by 8th grade, these same students have year after year beat state averages on the CMT and proven that Connecticut's vexing achievement gap can, in fact, be closed. In fact this year, we are the #1 school in CT for African American Achievement. These successes are the direct result of the hard work and skill of a talented group of educators.

Which brings me to the reason why I am here with you today. During my six years as principal of Amistad, teacher certification and compliance has been one of the most frustrating issues that have stood in the way of creating and maintaining the strongest teaching team we can build. Indeed, compliance with certification requirements is the only reason our school was not granted a full, 5-year renewal of our charter two years ago. After a lot of hard work by both our team and staff at the State Department of Education, we have now reduced the certification problem to a small handful of hard cases – but these cases are really hard and include several teachers who are responsible for Amistad's success over the last several years. My hope today is to introduce a few of these teachers to you, and by doing so, to highlight why I believe passing Senate Bill 1104 is such an important step for CT.

Clare Byran came to us three years ago. Last year, 92% of Clare's seventh grade students, all selected by lottery from the City of New Haven, scored at proficiency on the CMT. 72% of Clare's students were at goal or advanced. This compares to 52 percent of New Haven students who scored proficient in writing and 25 percent who scored at goal or advanced. When you enter her classroom, you see a passionate educator developing both great persuasive writers – and great poets. Claire loves her students, and they love her right back. She has incredibly high expectations – and her students rise to meet them. We are fortunate to have a number of very talented teachers at Amistad – and yet, even amongst this group, Clare stands out.

Clare holds a Master's degree in education from the University Of Melbourne, Australia—the biggest and most prestigious university in the state of Victoria. She specialized in English and history. She is certified to teach English Language Arts grades 7-12 in her home country. She came to us with 4 years of language arts teaching experience under her belt in grades 7-12. During that time she created curriculum in writing and reading.

According to Connecticut Certification standards, Clare is not eligible to teach grades 7-12 language arts. According to the State Department, in order for Clare to qualify for certification, she needs to take first-year undergraduate courses in math, science and foreign languages. Completing these courses would be both expensive and time-consuming – and it is difficult to argue that they would make her a better teacher. Based on her performance, I would like her next year to coach our 6th and 8th grade writing teachers and lead our writing team in our long-term planning efforts. Instead, under guidance from SDE, I am being asked to terminate her.

Another tough certification case involves our upper-school science teacher Lauren Horne. Lauren has a BA in astro physics from Boston University. She has a master's degree in education with a secondary science focus from George Washington University. She has taught three years of high school science in Washington, DC, including chemistry and physics. Then she taught three years of middle school science in Boston, MA, where she also served as science department chair. Along the way, she has designed curriculum and designed several science courses, including a special education class. We recruited her through our Leadership Fellows program and were fortunate enough to have her sign on as a teacher. She is now the chair of our science program, the 8th grade chair, and a teacher coach.

According to CT certification requirement, Lauren is not eligible for certification as a middle school science teacher. She would need to take a special education class, a biology class, a chemistry class, and a U.S. History course to be eligible for even a provisional educator's certificate. She is currently working under a long-term substitute certificate and, again, I am being told I need to terminate her.

A third teacher I would like to introduce is Emily Morse, who is our 7th grade reading teacher and grades 7-8 reading coach. Last year she was one of the three reading teachers that led our 7th graders to setting a school record last year on the reading CMT (91% proficiency and 85% mastery – compared to 66 perecent and 53% respectively for New Haven Public Schools). No class at any grade has achieved those scores at our school – and few do in the State. Judging by our internal Interim Assessment results, our current class is poised to achieve even higher scores. This year Emily teaches every section of 7th grade reading.

Emily has eight years of middle school teaching experience in both California and Connecticut. She has a master's degree in remedial reading grades k-12. She is certified k-6 in Connecticut. Unfortunately, the statutes do not allow her to teach 7th grade reading. According to certification rules, a 7-12 certified teacher can teach 6thgrade, but a k-6 certified teacher cannot teach 7th grade.

I'm working really hard to convince all three of these teachers to do all of the required coursework, but they are honestly very frustrated about the situation, and I'm not sure we're going to be able to hold on to them.

These are three of the most talented teachers I have ever met. Without them, Amistad would not be the school that we are. Yet according to Connecticut certification regulations, I would be better off replacing these teachers with rookie teachers, who are recent graduates of state certification programs.

I hope my stories make two points apparent. First, I hope that you understand that we are as committed as you are to hiring and developing high-quality, highly-effective teachers. We believe that the quality of the teachers we have is the single greatest factor contributing to the success of our students.

Second, I believe these stories illustrate a real issue with our CT state certification requirements. Our requirements, while designed to uphold a respectable minimum standard for Connecticut teachers to meet, are also creating an unintended consequence of keeping some of the best teachers out of the classroom.

Senate Bill 1104 has the potential to remove these road blocks to keeping great teachers for me. I don't believe that there is a principal in the Achievement First Network who wouldn't make the same statement. This bill, from my seat, seems like a decisive shift in focus away from teacher "qualifications" to teacher "effectiveness". I hope that the state legislature can create this avenue for great, highly effective teachers like Clare Bryan, Lauren Horne, and Emily Morse, so they can continue to serve Connecticut's students.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today.

H – 1112

CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS
2011

VOL.54
PART 21
6898 – 7240

On page 31, Calendar 567, substitute for Senate Bill 1104, AN ACT CONCERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS, favorable report of the Committee on Education.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Representative -- Representative Fleischmann of the 18th, Chairman of the Education Committee.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The question is acceptance of the joint committee's favorable report and passage of the bill. Will you remark?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Mr. Speaker, the good bill before us, quite simply, would allow for waivers for teachers at charter schools who have demonstrated their effectiveness to the commissioner on education and past practice exams in their area of expertise to demonstrate that they were indeed competent to be working in the Connecticut classroom.

These are terrific teachers who are ready,

working in Connecticut today. Terrific administrators working in Connecticut today who we will keep on the job.

In that spirit, Mr. Speaker, the Clerk is in possession of LCO Number 7381. I ask that the Clerk please call and I be given permission to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Representative, did you say 7831?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

7381. 7381, previously designated Senate Amendment "A."

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 7381, which has previously been designated Senate Amendment "A."

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 7381, Senate "A," offered by Representatives Fleischmann, Guiliano and Senators Stillman and Boucher.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize the amendment. Is there objection to summarization? Is there objection? Hearing none, Representative Fleischmann, do you want to proceed

with summarization.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Essentially, this amendment before us does two things. Number one, it lifts the cap on the number of waivers from 15 percent to 30 percent, which is considered a level that will work for the charter schools in Connecticut.

And second, it draws a bright line making it clear that those who have certification are part of the teachers retirement system. Those who have waivers, but not certification, are not part of the teachers retirement system.

I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The question before the Chamber is on adoption of Senate Amendment "A." Will you remark further on the amendment? Will you remark on the amendment? If not, I will try your minds. All those in favor of the amendment, signify by saying, aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Opposed, nay.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Nay.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The ayes have it and the amendment is adopted.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Representative Fleischmann.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk is in possession of an amendment, LCO Number 7920. I ask that the Clerk please call and I be given permission to summarize.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Will the Clerk please call LCO 7920, which will be designated House Amendment Schedule "A."

THE CLERK:

LCO Number 7920, House "A," offered by Representatives Fleischmann and Guiliano and Senator Stillman.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The Representative seeks leave of the Chamber to summarize the amendment. Is there objection to summarization? Is there objection?

Representative Fleischmann, you may proceed with summarization.

REP. FLEISCHMANN (18th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The amendment that's now before us is one that is in entirely in the spirit of the amendment we just passed, but it works better. Senate Amendment "A" had some ambiguity in its drafting. House Amendment "A" eliminates all such ambiguity, making it entirely clear that those who are certified are part of the teachers retirement system; those who receive waivers and permits are not.

I move adoption.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The question before the Chamber is on adoption of House Amendment "A." Will you remark on the amendment? Anyone want to remark on the amendment? Okay. If not, I will try your minds. All those in favor of, signify by saying aye.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Aye.

SPEAKER DONOVAN:

Opposed, nay.

REPRESENTATIVES:

Nay.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The amendment is adopted.

Will you remark further on the bill as amended?

Representative Lavielle of the 143rd.

REP. LAVIELLE (143rd):

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in support of this bill, in very strong support of this bill. It is an important bill because, as we know, Connecticut has the largest achievement gap in the country, and charter schools are playing a vital role in closing it.

They are, as we remember, a laboratory setting where anything goes if it works, if it means effective teaching. And charter schools put a premium on effective teachers and effective students and they correlate the results between the two and document them.

Charter schools in Connecticut are getting

results. The Connecticut mastery -- mastery test scores, at -- at all grade levels, are outstripping, Connecticut averages by more than 10 percent and substantially more than twice the scores in cities like Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven.

Charter schools are public schools. But many of them have teachers and administrators who don't have Connecticut public school certificates. They may have certificates from other states. They may have experience teaching in private schools, or they may be young teachers who haven't accumulated a lot of experience yet.

But, without exception, if they are retaining their jobs in private schools, they have been proven to be effective teachers, otherwise, they wouldn't be there. And without this bill, these people can't continue in their jobs. And we have to reward, not punish, their success.

We can't let our charter schools lose the momentum they've gained. And we owe it to the children of the state not to let that happen. And we also owe it to the state to do everything we can to make sure it has the best educated population

possible.

Therefore, I urge everyone in the Chamber to support the bill. It's crucial to the quality of education in Connecticut.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative. Representative Guiliano of the 23rd.

REP. GIULIANO (23rd):

Thank you -- thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of these amendments which are now the bill. The bills -- the amendments established the charter school educators permit, again lifting the cap on waivers. A couple of small but important steps in support of this very unique educational opportunity for our children. I urge the membership's support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative McCrory of the 7th.

REP. McCRORY (7th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And through you, Mr. Speaker, I just rise in support of this piece of language. I think it's a great opportunity. It came about -- a compromise from both sides of the Chamber and from organizations. This opportunity will give our children a chance at life, that means giving them a good education.

(Inaudible) like it was said, charter schools are public schools. They've done a great job. And also, the regular schools that do a good job -- or that we need to support excellence, and by doing this, it gives the opportunity to continue the excellence. Thank you very much and I hope my colleagues support it.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative.

Representative Kokoruda of the 101st.

REP. KOKORUDA (101st):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't repeat what all my colleagues have said. I just want to say that I think this is an important change in the bill. I'm very happy with it. Charter schools have filled a niche. We heard many people speak about the problems with a lot of our city

schools and what charter schools are doing in each of those communities.

So -- and I would remind folks that we bring some of the brightest and the best into are charter schools. Teach for America is a major part of some of the schools that I've looked at. So I want to thank Representative Fleischmann, Representative Guiliano for bringing this forward. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative. Representative Williams of the 68th.

REP. WILLIAMS (68th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening.

Just briefly, in support of the bill before us here tonight. I'm very excited about the prospect of enhancing our charter school system. And I thank Representative Fleischmann and Representative Guiliano.

You know, I have become a strong supporter of the charter school movement over the years. When I first sat on the Education Committee many years ago, I got the opportunity to get to know many of the students and teachers at the Amistad Academy, and watched that

organization grow and -- over the years into the unbelievable organization that it is.

I think it complements the traditional public schools that we have here in Connecticut. And I think this is one step further in enhancing the great job that they do in Connecticut. So I urge support for the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Thank you, Representative. Will you remark further on the bill as amended? Will you remark further on the bill as amended? If not, will staff and guests please come to the Well of the House. Will the members please take your seats. The machine will be opened.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber. The House is voting by roll call. Members to the Chamber.

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? Will the members please check the board to determine if your vote has been properly cast. If all members have voted the machine will be locked and the Clerk

will take a tally. The Clerk will please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Senate Bill 1104 is amended by Senate "A" and House "A".

Total number voting	144
Necessary for passage	73
Those voting Yea	142
Those voting Nay	2
Those absent and not voting	7

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The bill as amended is passed.

The Chamber will stand at ease.

(Chamber at ease.)

DEPUTY SPEAKER RYAN:

The Chamber will come back to order.

Are there any announcements or points of personal privilege?

Representative Noujaim of the 74th.

REP. NOUJAIM (74th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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Madam President, members of the Circle, over the past years I've had the honor of serving as Chairman of the Internship Committee. And every year it's just so impressive that the quality and the depth of our interns just continue to exceed our expectations.

I've been honored this past session to have a young intern help me in my office. His name is Drew Nack. He is a sophomore at the University of Connecticut. He majors in political science. He lives in Cheshire and he's worked on various local campaigns and I would appreciate if the Circle could give him our standard honor of appreciation.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Drew, thank you for all your help.

Senator Stillman.

I'm sorry, I thought you called it.

I'm going to ask the Clerk to call it again.

THE CLERK:

Calling from Calendar page 7, recalling Calendar Number 294, File Number 508, Substitute for Senate Bill 1104, AN ACT CONCERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS,

Favorably Reported, Committee on Education. Clerk is in possession of amendments.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Thank you, Madam President. I move the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Acting on approval of the bill, will you remark further?

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Yes, thank you very much.

This bill allows the Education Committee -- commissioner, starting in the next school year to waive state certification for teachers and administrators working at charter schools, but at a -- only a certain percentage of them.

The Clerk has an amendment, LCO Number 7381 and if he would kindly call it and I be allowed to summarize.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

LCO 7381, which will be designated Senate Amendment Schedule "A" is offered by Senator Stillman of the 20th district, et al.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Thank you, Madam President. I move adoption of the amendment.

THE CHAIR:

The question is on adoption. Will you remark?

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Yes, thank you.

This is a strike -- strike all amendment and it addresses the concern of the teachers in our charter schools and some of them currently are not certified teachers in the state of Connecticut.

So it allows the Commissioner of Education to waive the requirement of certification, but only for 30 percent of the combined percentage of teachers and administrators in a charter school only.

And what it does is these teachers have to be employed by the charter school. And the Commissioner can waive the state certification and grant a teacher in the charter school a charter

school educator permit. That would be the name of the certificate that they will hold. It is not equivalent to a state certified teacher because that teacher will not be allowed to join the State Teacher Retirement System unless they become a Connecticut state certified teacher.

But in order to be granted that permit, the teacher who is not certified will have to provide information through the school that they are -- that they can -- well, first of all, they have to go to the department and they have to take the PRAXIS exams, PRAXIS I and possibly PRAXIS II depending on their -- the classes that they teach. And that if they receive a satisfactory score on that and they also demonstrate elements of effectiveness, they will be given this waiver.

The waiver will also entitle them -- or the permit will also entitle them to become part of a bargaining unit. And the charter schools and the teacher associations are in support of this amendment which now becomes the bill. And I urge its adoption.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER (26th):

Thank you, Madam President. Madam President, I rise to support the amendment and thank the distinguished chair once again this morning -- it looks like education is on a roll -- for the very hard work and in a very difficult environment surrounding this issue.

There is no question it is very controversial in Connecticut although it seems unfortunate that it is, given that we're one of the states that has one of the finest charter school organizations in the country.

It actually started here with some of the schools that operate amongst only a handful in the entire state that deal with low income and minority students selected by lottery, that are now outperforming state averages and achievement tests, providing some very powerful examples that our states very difficult achievement gap can indeed be closed.

We should make sure that we understand that this achievement gap is real. That, in fact, we've

studied the numbers and amongst our lowest performing, lowest income students as compared to other states, just as low income and underperforming, ours are doing worse, as are our top performing students. So we have an achievement gap even at the higher end of the scale.

And it really should be our collective focus, both here and in the executive branch to solve this very difficult, vexing problem, because it certainly speaks to the health of our workforce in Connecticut and to the prospects for our state's economy going forward.

And we are very lucky to have one of the nation's most respected organizations, Achievement First, that supports the legislation. In fact, they do feel that it starts to move the ball just slightly forward.

And we couldn't have more compelling testimony than in one of our own members of the Education Committee, our vice-chairman, Representative Doug McCrory, who, he himself, is a certified teacher/administrator and working in some of our most disadvantaged school systems, who has been very articulate in explaining that he is in a difficult

school where there are a lot of underperforming students and right across the street there is a charter school whose children are being taught and are far outperforming without teachers -- without certification necessarily.

That doesn't mean that in all cases that this is going to happen, but in fact, that's a very clear example where it is indeed happening. So I do urge support of this amendment. It starts to move the ball forward. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark further?

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER (12th):

Thank you, Madam President.

You know, I used to be on the Board of Regents in New York and had a lot of experience with this kind of thing. I say to my Education chairman here. And there was a time when I was in New York that I would have strongly opposed this bill on the ground that lack of state certification for a teacher was a dumbing down of the process and would be a reason

why we'd have the achievement gap between urban children and suburban children or students.

I've changed my mind about that. I -- I've become a believer in alternative forms of certification, which this really goes toward.

Charter schools were originally intended as laboratories for -- for the public school system. They've become -- something much bigger now. But when you look at the experience of teachers in Teach For America, for example, many of whom do not have teachers certificates and realize the tremendous contribution they're making to inner city public schools in the United States.

And when you look to those states who are giving credit for life experience many of us -- when I came to Connecticut I went to University of New Haven to find out what I needed to do to become a teacher. I was going to go into a second career. And Senator LeBeau is good on the subject. And I found, my golly, I would have to go to school for three years, a tremendous amount of work, a tremendous investment of money as well. So we have -- we are now looking at alternative forms of certification, life experience, work experience and

I think this bill goes in the exactly right direction, particularly because we've seen charter schools become laboratories and now more than laboratories for the whole school system in Connecticut. Thanks.

THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO (13th):

Thank you, Madam President. I, too, rise in support of this bill. I do wish to commend Senator Stillman for her leadership again for pushing this legislation forward. During the course of the last few months I've heard a lot of testimony from people who are involved in the charter schools in Connecticut and indeed the record is very, very impressive of what some of these schools have done, educating, particularly, inner city youth. It's truly impressive.

And I think sometimes that people think that if you don't have a certification to be a teacher that you can't' teach or you're not qualified to teach. But there's some very, very good people in these

schools who have unbelievably impressive credentials who just unfortunately don't have the certificate required in the state of Connecticut, who nonetheless deliver a quality education to the children who attend these schools. And I think that's evidenced by some of the dramatic results that we've seen in terms of graduation rates and children doing well on the standardized test scores.

If you don't mind, I do have one quick question if I might ask the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR SUZIO (13th):

Thank you. Through you, Madam President, Senator Stillman, there's a requirement in here that any administrator or person providing instruction of pupil services in the charter school, et cetera, et cetera, shall participate in the State Teacher's Retirement system, et cetera.

I've always been curious about why we mandate participation in the Teacher's Retirement System if there's a group of teachers that don't want to. And

I'd be curious if you could explain what the rationales or the thinking behind that. Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Yes, thank you. Through you, Madam President. That is -- those are the parameters for joining the Teacher Retirement System. We have to remember the state teacher retirement system was established many years before charter schools came along. And I do believe it's appropriate. If a teacher is certified in this state then they deserve that privilege of being able to join the Teacher's Retirement System. And for many of them, that's far better than Social Security.

SENATOR SUZIO (13th):

Thank you. Just -- if I may. I'm just curious as to why we mandate it. In other words, I understand why we should mandate that it be available to them. But apparently we go beyond that and insist that they join it and if there were some alternative that they might want to participate in. Apparently they have no choice. And that's why I'm just curious why we mandate not only the

availability but we mandate that they actually participate. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Oops, Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Thank you, Madam President. What this language is actually saying is that unless you are a Connecticut certified teacher, you may not join. I mean, if you are a certified teacher in the state of Connecticut you have -- I know the language is a little confusing. But that's what it really says. Is that -- it's legalese, so it's a little confusing.

But actually what it says is that you may not participate in the Teacher Retirement System unless you obtain a professional certification pursuant to Section 10-145B, which reflects, number one, that you've -- you are legally certified through the state Department of Education. There is a Teacher's Retirement Board. There are strict rules and regulations. And that's the law. Through you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Suzio.

SENATOR SUZIO (13th):

Thank you, Madam President. Through you, I wish to thank Senator Stillman for clarifying. I would -- I'm not going to propose any kind of amendment or anything, but I would suggest maybe in eh future when this is revisited, perhaps the language could be clarified a little bit more. I think it would be helpful. And again, thank you, through the president, thank you for your clarification.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark further? Will you remark further? If not -- ah, Senator LeBeau.

SENATOR LEBEAU (3rd):

Good afternoon, Madam President.

I'd like to thank Senator Stillman for bringing this bill out today. And I think as part of this bill and what you were just explaining to Senator Suzio, that it's an important thing that you've pointed out, which is that there's a incentive here that if teachers who are otherwise not certified want to participate -- by the way, it's a -- it's a good retirement system. It's -- we pay --teachers

pay part of it. We have half the cost of the Teacher's Retirement System -- which most of the people listening, they don't know that. They think it's carried entirely by the state. It's not. Teachers carry -- carry at least half the cost themselves and it goes to the Teacher's Retirement Fund.

But it's a good system. It's been well managed over the years. Teachers can retire and not have to live in poverty. They can live in relative comfort, which I believe they should after 37 and a half years in order to maximize their benefits.

So this is an incentive is the point I want to make. And I went a roundabout way on that, but this is an incentive for teachers, whether they're -- if they're not certified and they're part of that 30 percent, to become certified. I mean, if we really believe that certification has some meaning and I do believe that it has some meaning and that some of those classes that we take can make us better teachers, particularly as we do our work, we learn, we ask questions -- and I'm talking as a teacher, where we can really grow as teachers. That that can

be very valuable to become a better and better teacher.

So I -- what I really like about this bill, among other things, but particularly is this incentive to join the system, to become certified and to become part of the Teacher Retirement System, which I think is a very good positive that is built into the bill.

And I want to congratulate Senator Stillman for making that part of the bill. Thank you, Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you.

Will you remark further?

Senator Prague.

SENATOR PRAGUE (19th):

Thank you, Madam President. I, too, want to thank Senator Stillman for putting all the work that she's put into this bill to come up with a bill that's agreeable to almost everybody.

I'm not going to support the bill because as an old school teacher in my other life. I believe in certification. I don't believe that the public school teachers should be required to be certified

and yet the charter school teachers don't have that requirement.

I'm also very curious about the fact that certified teachers cannot collect Social Security. I hope someday that's corrected, but as of the moment, they are not eligible for Social Security. I am wondering if these charter school folks who are teaching -- if that's considered a regular job and Social Security is taken out of their pay? And they could collect Social Security because this is not a so-called certified teaching position. They're not able to apply to the Teacher's Retirement Board unless they become certified. But until they become certified, does this allow them to accumulate the quarters that they need to be able to collect Social Security?

I think that's an issue that would be important for us to follow up on. Because if this is a so-called job, and not a teaching position because the certification isn't required, perhaps they would then be eligible for that Social Security benefit that certified teachers are not eligible for.

But be that as it may, my primary concern is the certification. And on that basis, I won't be supporting the bill. Thank you.

(Senator Duff of the 25th in the Chair.)

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further? Senator -- Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY (28th):

Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise in support of the amendment and might have more to say about the bill. But I just wanted to respond to Senator Prague's concern and opposition in that her view is that all teachers should be certified. You know, the charter school movement predated my first term in office. But as I began to learn quickly about our charter schools, many people who were part of putting charter schools together spoke about how they were meant to be laboratories.

I think all of us agree that well over 90 percent of our kids are going to be taught and learn

from our public school system. And yet, charter schools are public schools. But they were thought of as perhaps laboratories that could do things differently. Because you didn't want to implement change across and entire statewide public school system without surety that that change was going to work and benefit our teachers and our administrators and our children.

And so one of the things that you could do as a laboratory is look at whether or not a percentage of administrators and teachers didn't have to be certified and how that would impact the education and how that would influence outcomes for our kids.

My brother's a public school teacher. My brother has taught in the Bridgeport public school system for over 20 years. My two girls are in public schools, my son was educated in public schools. This isn't anti-public school, it's not anti-teacher. I have enormous respect for teachers. You know, my kids spend more time each day with their teacher than they do with me.

But charter schools have provided answers to questions we have not been able to answer in this state. Not all of them. And not all charter

schools, you know, work as well as Amistad. But we all agree, I think, on some basic principles. One, the achievement gap is an embarrassment. And the fact that some kids don't get the same education as others is shameful of our society.

I think we also all agree that beyond any social program, beyond any job program, anything you can think of, getting a great equal education for every single child is the one factor that can get everybody to the same place if they want to.

And right now that's not happening in our schools. So I respect Senator Prague, I think she knows that.

But I think -- I think this is a good measure. And I was chuckling a little bit with Senator Boucher about the fact that you know, one version initially talked about a percentage of teachers having certification and the percentage of administrators having certification and now it's combined because at some charter schools, there's so few administrators, it would effectively would have meant that every administrator had to be certified.

And I said, boy, maybe there's a lesson for our public school system with the fact that they seem to

be so lean on administration. Because I probably would prefer much more of my dollars to go to teachers in the classroom and supplies and tools and paraprofessionals in that classroom perhaps, more so than some of the administration.

So I think this is a good amendment and I urge adoption. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further? Remark further?

I'll try your minds. All those in favor of the amendment, please signify by saying "Aye."

SENATORS:

Aye.

THE CHAIR:

Opposed, say nay.

The ayes have it, the amendment passes.

Senator Stillman.

SENATOR STILLMAN (20th):

Thank you, Mr. President.

And I'm glad -- I realize that we have a change of -- change up there. I've not embarrassed anybody, but thank you.

With that the adoption of the amendment, that becomes the bill. And I just -- I want to thank people who worked with me on this bill, Representative Fleischmann. And I want to thank Senator Boucher as well and Representative Giuliano because this was a compromise on everyone's part.

And I approach this whole issue by not wanting to change anything because I, too, am a firm believer in certification of teachers. I think there are subject matters that if you want to teach you should -- you should take those courses in school that are very important to child development, et cetera. And there are some teachers in the charter schools who may not have taken those particular classes. It doesn't necessarily mean that they don't know how to teach. But I do think that certified teachers have the kind of education that I would like to see in the classroom.

But this is a new age and I'm trying to adopt -- adapt to that new age. As I said, this bill is a compromise, but -- and in the end I think we have a very workable product. And it's one that I hope will pass here in the Senate and again in the House. And that what we can continue to focus on is

providing the best education we can for our children, no matter where they live in the state of Connecticut. That is one of our failings, that we're not doing that.

Many years ago when we adopted the program of having charter schools, I was in the state House and I voted against it. Because I was very concerned that our resources would be channeled elsewhere other than in the traditional public schools. And to a certain degree, I think I was right.

But I also know that the world is changing and whether we missed an opportunity then to make our traditional public schools even better, I guess we'll never know. That was my hope. But obviously I didn't win that battle.

So today I'm just hoping that we can move forward and continue on the path of providing the best education we can for our children. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further?

Senator Boucher.

SENATOR BOUCHER (26th):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I rise to support the bill and also to thank the distinguished chair of the Education Committee. As you've just heard this is a most difficult bill for her and vote, and shows her leadership and willingness to be open to very strong views and opinions about what many of us feel is a very important development in education.

And it should be noted for the record, by the way, that not all charter schools necessarily outperform the other schools. But it certainly has raised the bar of our regular public school systems. In Florida it can be documented and certainly even in Connecticut, New Haven, where the public school system being open to some of the different practices of their charter schools have implemented some improvements.

It should also be noted that the charter school movement started in 1991. So it wasn't that long ago, in the state of Minnesota. And the central premise for the charter schools there was that it was not just a laboratory for learning, but it was also a laboratory for teaching. In other words, try any new idea about a teaching technique no matter

what background you have. And it was to be public, nonsectarian, open to all students. It could be a new school or a converted school. It could be more than one organization that could sponsor as a local school board, a state, a university, a city like New York City, by the way, that is begging for more. In fact they have contracted to put 15 new schools. And guess who they want to do that for them? Again, Connecticut leads in this movement, fledgling movement and I understand that there are now governors and mayors calling them up because they're so welcoming to them.

And that's why I feel that this small move, this small step is so critical for us in keeping some of that talent right here where we are.

But in addition the central premise was that charter schools would be free from most state rules, with the exception of building safety, nondiscrimination and state testing. They should all abide by that. And for that, charters are free of local labor management agreements and in exchange for that waiver, they're expected to improve achievement. And by the way, in those that don't improve achievement in the state of Florida, local

school boards can close them down if they have back to back failing grades on what they're doing in their charter schools. So there's a price to pay if they're not doing their job.

I also wish to commend Chairman Fleischmann of the House and ranking member Marilyn Giuliano for working so hard, as I said, on this, you know, surprisingly controversial bill, which many of us feel should not be controversial when you compare the fourth grade improvement level in some of our major cities.

For example, in New Haven, you have at the fourth grade level, students performing in an achievement school 75 percent. And in the New Haven district overall, there's a 36 percent. Whereas also, the eighth grade students have similar results.

We can also point to the different other towns and cities in our state with regards to similar types of achievements. In Bridgeport, you can see that their achievement school firsts are performing at the seventh grade at the 92 percentile versus general overall, substantially less. So we actually have some good examples.

And in fact some of us were lucky to visit some of those schools. I just was blown away visiting a sixth grade student in the absolute worst part of Bridgeport where no one was cherry picked, it was totally by lottery. And those students -- I sat down at the back of the classroom and I thought I was in a senior high school class for grammar. It was amazing. They were all sitting in their seats, they had uniforms, just a -- you know, basically a navy polo shirt, boys and girls together, khaki pants, all standing at attention at this just brilliant young lady that was talking about all manners of things. And I had to pay attention to really understand what she was doing. But they knew exactly where they were.

So I guess what I want to say is that this is one small step moving this forward, and it's very necessary. And I -- and I can't accentuate even more as our good Minority Leader stated, these are learning and teaching laboratories, places where best practices are put into action and are supposed to get results without any limits being put.

And the demands for these schools are just outstripping even their resources. And I'm very,

very concerned that if we don't move this forward that we'll soon see them leave our state and grow in other states that are welcoming them and more accepting.

So for that, I really urge adoption of this particular amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further?

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY (11th):

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, speaking in support of the amendment, want to commend Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann for their extraordinary work and consensus building on this issue and second the comments of Senator McKinney and Senator Boucher, also.

Charter schools, as we know, are nationally -- have shown mixed results. But here in Connecticut, we do have some very outstanding models of charter schools, particularly in my home city of New Haven, the Amistad Academy, Elm City College have achieved exceptional results when they take in students who

are often several years behind grade level and after three or four years of that highly intensive, aspirational program, with focus on reading and math and writing skills, they are at or above grade level and very well prepared for high school by the time they finish in eighth grade.

And this is a model that we do need to expand and to replicate in ways that -- wherever we can. And we have to build in as much flexibility as we can while at the same time making sure that we do have strong standards for credentialing as well as the flexibility for the charters to operate in their quasi-independent mode.

As we remember, the genesis of the charter school bill initially in Connecticut came out of a very intensive debate as to whether or not we were going to remain entirely with the status quo in public education or whether we were going to go as far as perhaps adopting school vouchers.

And the creation of charter schools was a compromise result in that debate. That we would allow for a somewhat more entrepreneurial model of schools, where they would be managed in a way that

would be free from some of the seen as bureaucratic restrictions of the standard public schools.

But at the same time, there would be a strong level of accountability. That they would be granted charters for limited periods of time that would need to be renewed and that there would be strong state oversight and the opportunity to rescind that charter if the school did not deliver on its promise. So we have had a number of charter schools that have thrived.

And as we said earlier, many of them now have become a model for other schools. The model is being replicated, expanded to other states and having some other spillover effect as well. The shining success of charter schools in New haven actually has given impetus to a school reform movement in that city that has resulted in a teacher's contract for the -- in the city of New Haven which incorporates many of the reforms in terms of teacher accountability that the Obama administration is pushing at the national level. Secretary Duncan is actually cited the New Haven contract in some ways as a model.

And I think, clearly, none of this would have happened except for the strong impact of the charter schools in the city of New Haven, the impact that those schools have had and the impact, in particular, of the Amistad model. And the fact that it has refocused and changed the entire debate on public education in New Haven and has grown, I think, to expand throughout the state.

So I think that this amendment will allow the charter schools to go forward with a needed flexibility that they need, but at the same time, having the degree of accountability standards and concerns about credentialing that will keep everyone comfortable that a proper level of regulation is in play.

So again, I wanted to commend Senator Stillman, in particular for the great work that she has done in negotiating this through a number of very contentious meetings and discussions and bringing together parties who were initially so far apart that a consensus seemed unlikely. But she has, in fact, achieved that consensus. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY (28th):

Thank you. Madam President, just in terms of some final thoughts on the bill -- and I don't want to go on too long or get myself into too much trouble. But you know, this is a compromise. And Senator Looney is right for Senator Stillman and Senator Boucher and respective Chairs and Ranking Members in the House to bring together so many interest groups with varied interests and many times opposing interests, it's an accomplishment.

But I'm frustrated by that. And I'm frustrated by the compromise on issues around education. One of the things we've had this conversation before around the Circle, one of the things that I'm -- that I have no fear in stating publicly, even at Republican-only meetings is that President Obama has some great ideas when it comes to education. Secretary Duncan, I think, is pushing America and pushing the states to reform their education systems to the better.

But one of the things that Secretary Duncan has always, always talked about -- and we argued this

when we passed Race To The Top legislation -- is that he doesn't want states that are willing to sit there and compromise and water down proposals. He wants states to be bold with reform.

And I still think we're lacking the will in this Legislature. Some oppose it on policy and I understand that. But I'm one who stands here and hopes that we will continue to be more bold in our reform ideas.

Again, I don't have all the answers, but I know that the greatest thing we can do for all future generations, regardless of their socio-economic status, regardless of all the differences among us in life is to give every kid a great education. And right now, not all of our kids in Connecticut get the same education. And that's something that I think we're going to need bold reform in order to make that happen. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further? Will you remark further?

If not, Mr. Clerk, please announce pendency of a roll call vote.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber? An immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber?

THE CHAIR:

Have all members voted? Have all members voted? If you've voted, please check the bal -- please check your vote to make sure it's accurately recorded.

If all members have voted, Mr. Clerk, please announce the tally?

THE CLERK:

The motion is on passage of Senate Bill 1104, as amended by Senate Amendment Schedule "A."

Total Number Voting 35

Those voting Yea 33

Those voting Nay 2

Those absent or not voting 1.

THE CHAIR:

The bill passes.

Mr. Clerk.

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Senator Duff in the Chair.

THE CHAIR:

The Senate will come back to order.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, several additional items to mark at this time. First, Mr. President, is --

Yes, Mr. President. On calendar page 52, Calendar 294, Senate Bill 1104. Mr. President, would move to place this item on the consent calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Without objection, so ordered.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Mr. President.

The second item is calendar page 41, Calendar 202, Senate Bill 1139. If that might be the next item called, Mr. President, to be followed by calendar page 41, Calendar 214, Senate Bill 210; to be followed by calendar page 24, Calendar 572, House Bill 6159.

will you call the tally.

THE CLERK:

Madam question -- Madam President --

THE CHAIR:

Whatever.

THE CLERK:

It's getting late. It's tomorrow.

The question is Senate Bill 1034.

Total Number voting	36
Necessary for adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The bill is passed.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk might call the consent calendar items at this time.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Madam President, the following items were

previously placed on the consent calendar.

On page 24, Calendar Number 572, House Bill 6159; on page 41, Calendar 202, Senate Bill 1139; on page 41, Calendar 214, Senate Bill 210; on page 52, Calendar 294, Senate Bill 1104. That completes the items previously placed on consent.

THE CHAIR:

At this time, Mr. Clerk, since all the items are there, will you please call a roll call vote for the Consent Calendar Number 1 and the machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

An immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber. An immediate roll call vote has been ordered in the Senate. Will all Senators please return to the Chamber.

THE CHAIR:

All members have voted. If all members about it -- oops, we are missing two. Sorry.

There you go.

Have all members voted?

Thank you, Senator.

If all members have voted, the machine will be

locked and the Clerk, Mr. Clerk, will you announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Madam President, total number voting on the 1st Consent Calendar.

Total Number voting	36
Necessary for adoption	19
Those voting Yea	36
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	0

THE CHAIR:

The consent calendar has been adopted.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, would move immediate transmittal to the House of Representatives of all items acted upon in the Senate today requiring additional action by the House.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, that will conclude our