

Testimony of
Danielle Fragoso

Madison Teacher

Before the Education Committee

Re: HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate

February 22, 2019

Good afternoon chairs and members of the committee. My name is Danielle Fragoso, and I am an 11th & 12th-grade high school special education teacher, in Madison, CT.

I am here to speak in support of HB 7110.

I stand here before you today filled with honor and hope. It is a true honor to speak on behalf of teachers across the state who love their students, who love their profession, and love their communities. I am one of the lucky ones - someone who has found a career she loves in making a difference in the lives of children who struggle.

From my early days of teaching in New Haven, to my treasured days of teaching at Santa Monica High School in CA, I have had the privilege of working with students who have struggled, not only academically, but emotionally as well. While this work is rewarding, it also tests your resolve from time to time.

During my 15 years in Connecticut classrooms, I have been stabbed in the back with a pencil requiring medical attention. I have had to run across 4 lanes of traffic chasing students who fled the building. I have had to pull a student off another student who was being choked.

These are just a few of the instances that come to mind. This past summer, I experienced the worst situation in my career as a teacher. I was afraid for my life and the lives of my students and colleagues.

While cooking in our classroom kitchen, an agitated student kicked a paraprofessional in the stomach, thrusting her three feet back onto the floor. My fellow teacher and I tried to restrain him, but he pulled away, punched me in the eye, and eventually lunged for a large knife. I held his hand as he tried to stab us. He was shouting he wanted us dead and asking why it was so hard to take down two women. After 15 minutes, we finally got the knife away and he ran. Luckily there were two of us, or the outcome would have been much different.

My only thoughts were of my students and hoping none of them would get hurt.

Being attacked or threatened in one's workplace should not happen anywhere; especially in a classroom environment where we want our students to feel safe and loved.

We need systems in place to not only help teachers who are fearful of reporting incidents of threats— to one of support - knowing that our administration will have the same expectation -

that we should have a safe work environment as well. The systems in place in HB 7110, will provide supports and treatment to the students who need the most help. It will also create a system where teachers are protected and heard.

So, today I have hope; hope that our voices, my voice, is heard and valued and that our system will change to where we can all feel safe in our classrooms. I would also like to shed a light of hope in this forum, as I was given full support of my superintendent, principal, and special education director to be here today.

I know that that is not the case for all teachers in all districts - Thank you.