

Testimony of
Sue Fulleton

On behalf of

Anonymous Educator from Connecticut's Northeast Corner

Before the Education Committee

Re: HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate

February 22, 2019

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Sue Fulleton. I am a former teacher, and recently retired staff member of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), where I served as a field representative and director of member services.

Over 140 teachers sent letters to CEA expressing their concern about violence in the classroom occurring across the state. Some asked for their concerns to be left anonymous; others who wished to be here, could not due to the timing of the hearing. Today I am here to share with you the comments of a teacher from a rural community in Northeast Connecticut who wished to remain anonymous.

"I have been a kindergarten teacher for the past 6 years. Four out of the last 6 years I have had 2-3 violent and disruptive students per year. These students have torn apart my entire classroom throwing chairs and baskets of books, knocking over tables, throwing water bottles through a plastic scoop chair, throwing pencils, scissors, staplers, and frankly anything they could get their hands on. I have had to evacuate my classroom on almost a daily basis for fear that the other students would be hurt. I have students who would bolt from the classroom and run towards the door, to the point that I would have to leave my class to chase them in fear that they would run outside. I have been punched in the face, kicked, punched, pinched, and slapped on numerous occasions. I have been attacked by flying book baskets, shoes, chairs, and other objects, and because we are not allowed to stop a student, there is nothing to do but watch the hundreds of dollars that I spend of MY OWN MONEY get trashed in a matter of minutes. My supplies are NOT reimbursed and I have had to replenish any ruined materials. The other awful tragedy of our current predicament in public education is the loss of instructional time due to outbursts and evacuations.

Other students are being traumatized and there is an increase in anxiety behaviors including chewing on sleeves, not wanting to come to school, and other emotional outbursts in children that wouldn't normally be upset. Not to mention the emotional toll it has taken on me, the teacher. I have gained a lot of weight, have an increase in my blood pressure, and anxiety.

Something must be done for these children who are troubled, as well as for the teachers and the other students. The climate in education is grim and I don't see a lot of newer teachers staying for this kind of abuse."

In my time at CEA, I have been privy to many similar unfortunate circumstances. I am happy to share my insights and experience should you have any questions.

Thank you for your time.