

Testimony of
Ray Rossomando

On behalf of

Anonymous Educators from 3 Connecticut Small Towns

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 Ray Rossomando. I am a former teacher and currently serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA).

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 teachers from three small towns in New Haven, Tolland, Hartford counties.

New Haven County Educator

"I was punched in the face by a disruptive special-needs student as I attempted to stop him from throwing a chair across my classroom. He took out his anger on me by swinging punches, and one punch hit me in my jaw. This incident happened in front of my entire third-grade class. After the incident, it escalated even more, where this child then knocked over two desks. My entire class evacuated the room and headed into a nearby classroom for safety. These incidents are happening much too frequently, and something needs to be done to protect teachers and their students. Thank you very much."

Hartford County Educator

"How can teachers effectively teach students while objects are being thrown at them? How can I teach 10 months' worth of curriculum when I have students screaming and throwing themselves onto the ground, requiring the class to evacuate the classroom? Classroom safety and disruptive behavior is a major problem that must be addressed. Students who are ready to learn are constantly put aside due to disruptive behavior, and this needs to stop. It's time to take action to protect all school personnel and protect other students' education."

Tolland County Educator

This child has been violent, screamed profanities at his classmates, spit in his classmates' food and faces, and hit, kicked, and pushed his classmates. He has broken/destroyed/attempted to destroy boxes of crayons, highlighters, magic markers, books, pocket charts, Smart Boards, headphones, rest mats, iPads, computers, windows, ceiling tiles, and much more.

This child has punched teachers, threatened them with scissors, kicked teachers, and yelled profanities at teachers and administrators. This has occurred day after day, ALL day, for over 100 days of school.

The beauty of teaching kindergarten is that children love one another at this age. They do not hold grudges. They do not judge. Our class loves this dysregulated child. They care for him. They try to make him feel better or make him happy.

As of Friday (107+ days of school), my student was reassigned to another kindergarten classroom because of parent complaints. I do not want this student out of my classroom. I do not want another class negatively impacted by this child. I do not want esteemed colleagues to experience what I have this year. I do not think it is best for this child. I do not want him penalized for his traumatic life - this feels like another form of trauma for him. I have worked tirelessly to help him make gains, to help him learn how to keep others safe in his classroom, to help him learn his letters, his numbers, and how to read. I love him. I do not think this choice is the right one - I want a program for him. I want to help develop a successful program for him. I want to help administration build a successful alternative setting for children like my student. And I have been asking this for over 100 days.

I want hope."

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.