

Connecticut Legislative Black & Puerto Rican Caucus
Public Forum
Legislative Office Building
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Testimony of
Faith Sweeney

Chairman McGee, Vice Chairman Reyes, and distinguished members of the caucus,

Good Evening Black and Puerto Rican Caucus members. My name is Faith Sweeney and over the past 22 years, I have been a classroom teacher, literacy interventionist and literacy coach in Stamford, Greenwich, and Westport. Tonight I would like to address the issue of violence in the classroom and draw your attention to House Bill 7110 An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate, which has been raised by the Education Committee.

I would like to read a realistic fiction story based on my 22 years of teaching experience synthesized into a micro-story. As I share this story, please listen with a lens that advocates for involving voices of teachers who are facing the rising need for stress and trauma related resources due to “disruptive or injurious incidents that occur in classrooms.” This student’s name is 22 of years of teaching experience that has seen it all and seeks an action plan to be put in place to resolve “incidents of school violence” and protect all from unsafe classrooms.

It’s 10 in the morning, on any given school day. Many classrooms are well into their daily schedules with minimal interruptions. I’m off to my next classroom of curious reading detectives ready for some reading fun. Abruptly, my stride breaks as I notice movement in the distance; a cluster of teachers and a single student are walking in a disjointed shuffle towards the front door. “Leave me alone... I-NEED-TO-FINISH!!!!” pleads a frustrated child, unable to manage emotions while trying to struggle free in order to kick, punch or bite anyone in this student’s way and bolt straight out of the front door.

This first grader threw a chair towards a table filled with children because this student hadn’t finished a math page. This may surprise you, but this has become a common occurrence in schools across this country. Bullying and actions causing physical harm are overwhelming our educational system.

Each one of our future leaders of the world and teachers deserves to learn and teach in a safe place. There are many factors that cause stress and trauma, one blatant contributing factor is how our schools are becoming a mandated data machine. After 22 years of teaching and seeing

various changes implement overtime: each one has chipped away at the exploration phase of the learning process. The very place where we grow as problem solvers.

I ask you to take action in supporting bills that would focus resources on decreasing bullying and reduce and prevent incidents that cause physical harm. It is critical for classrooms to have proactive safety measures in place for every child and teacher so that teaching and learning are not interrupted by a potentially disruptive or injurious incidents.

Thank you.