

Testimony of

Stacey Pollock

Before the Education Committee

Raised Bill No. 5378

March 6, 2020

Members of the Education Committee; my name is Stacey Pollock, and I have been a teacher at Torrington Middle School for the past five years. Thank you for reading my testimony today on Raised Bill 5378, An Act Concerning Integration of Social-Emotional Learning in Programs of Professional Development for Educators in Connecticut. While this proposal is important, it is not enough to address the severity of the current problem.

What is truly necessary is a comprehensive approach to address student trauma and promote social-emotional learning. A comprehensive approach would include incorporating social-emotional learning standards into the grade 3 through 12 curricula, and creating model social-emotional learning units to help districts integrate strategies into their entire curriculum at a low-cost. It would also include requiring schools to have plans for helping students whose behavior indicates deeper needs through identifying a suitable location for a student who has been temporarily removed from class, implementing interventions to address underlying trauma, and ensuring teacher input into the supports and interventions necessary to help affected students and protect teachers who advocate for their students from workplace retaliation. Another facet would be to permit more flexibility in teacher evaluation plans to allow for social-emotional learning indicators by permitting special waivers from the state educator evaluation guidelines that require standardized testing indicators. Lastly, a special fund to hold revenues from a dedicated source in order to fund the programs in this bill would need to be established.

I have had the amazing opportunity to be trained in restorative practices. I am able to host circles in my classroom and talk to my students about issues in and out of our school building. Last week, two students got into an altercation in the hallway due to cyberbullying. A teacher ended up getting injured, and our school went into a shelter in place for a short while. The next day, I was able to talk to my students about the incident, answer questions, and calm any nerves about safety in our building. The worst part for me, however, was that I've known one of the students who fought for three years, and they had been in my class earlier in the day. This student is bright, and had recently been talking to me about their grades as we organized their binder. They had made plans to stay after school to receive additional help from another teacher. Neither of us had any idea there was additional stress in this student's life, and I wonder if the only strategy the student knew to use to solve the problem was fighting? If

additional programs were in place in our school, would this day have gone differently for this student?

In conclusion, a comprehensive approach to address student trauma and promote social-emotional learning is necessary in ALL Connecticut schools. Social-emotional learning needs to be integrated into the curriculum, schools need plans to help students in need, teacher evaluation plans should allow for a social-emotional indicator, and funds should be designated to make all of this reality.

Thank you for considering my testimony and all your efforts on behalf of students in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Stacey Pollock

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