

Testimony of

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S.B. No. 977 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VIRTUAL LEARNING

Before the Education Commission

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Elsa Batista and I have been a proud middle school teacher for over 13 years (both in Bronx, NY and Newington, CT) and a mother of a 9th grader and 6th grader in the town that I teach.

Teaching hybrid has been really challenging for me this year. My district has done an amazing job preparing me with sufficient tools and training to do the best I can for my students to succeed. But no matter how many tools I have under my belt, I cannot say with 100% certainty that I am giving each student my undivided attention. On a daily basis I have approximately 8 students in front of me and about 12 or so at home. At times, I catch myself just talking and looking at the students logging in from home (So I am looking and talking to a computer). As soon as I realize this is happening, I find myself just looking at the students in my class and not those in the computer. It is a constant back and forth and somewhere in between that game of ping pong, I find that I lose some of my students' attention.

Many do not feel comfortable with this teaching/learning style. Many of my students do not turn on their cameras to show that they "are in class". Many have siblings at home also learning from home so there is the issue of noise and distraction. So, they prefer to keep their cameras off. Others cannot connect...because of internet issues or connect to me, their classmates, or the lesson itself.

I teach a world language where it is key to **listen, see** my mouth as I pronounce the Spanish vocabulary and grammar needed to be successful in each lesson. It is key to turn and talk with a peer to practice a conversation piece. As an educator something I pride myself on is working in a team with my colleagues and creating connections with students. This year, I cannot say that I have been able to make those connections as well as pre-pandemic years.

I know that my students would benefit a great deal from receiving one teaching style-a teacher just focusing on them learning remotely or one teacher in the class working with them in person. I do not think that as a district, town, or state we are able to reach every student if we have to switch to synchronous, asynchronous learning and in person teaching.

Because we love our students, myself and my colleagues will continue to show up, try our best, send emails and make phone calls every day.

Thank you for your consideration.