# *Testimony of*

**Michaela Rae De Los Cientos**

**Aspiring Educator**

*Before the*

**Education Committee**

*Re:*

**SB 381 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND REVISIONS TO THE MANDATED REPORTER REQUIREMENTS.**

March 13, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of Senate Bill 381, which takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut. This bill ensures that our students receive the best possible education and that educators and the teaching profession are valued and respected.

As an aspiring educator, I chose to go on this career path knowing that I wouldn't be getting paid a lot. This didn't matter to me at first--what mattered was getting to make a difference in my students' lives. However, as I get closer and closer to graduating, parts of me begin to worry. Both of my parents are in the medical profession, so I didn't grow up with financial burdens. I had a roof over my head, something to eat, Christmas presents, family vacations, etc. However, I fear that I will not be able to provide the same childhood to my children.

I'm testifying for a minimum starting salary of $60,000 so I can be financially stable for myself and my future family. I don't want to live paycheck-to-paycheck or give my children a childhood that they don't deserve simply because I chose to pursue a career in something that I'm passionate about, rather than what pays the most. Human necessities--houses, cars, groceries, etc.--aren't getting cheaper, and our profession's salary needs to be able to keep up with that. With a low starting salary, it will be extremely difficult for me to build my finances and be able to take care of myself, even more so to prepare to take care of children I may have. These hardships are exacerbated when taking into account that some new educators may also have to pay off their student loans. Increasing the starting teaching salary will also entice those who want to become educators but don't, due to finances. This, in turn, will lessen the issue of the teacher shortage and revitalize this short-staffed profession. I also believe that educators just deserve to be getting paid more. Doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, etc. get paid so much more than teachers, when teachers are the ones who help them become these things! Educators help shape our future, and we deserve to have a salary that reflects that.

Thank for your time and consideration.