

Remarks of Mary Loftus Levine
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed certification changes

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Good afternoon. My name is Mary Loftus Levine, and I'm the Director of Policy and Professional Practice at the CT Education Association. I'd like to expand on Phil Apruzzese's remarks about the importance of active teacher involvement in moving change forward.

In 1986, when the Education Enhancement Act was in the making, teachers were at the table as one of the key stakeholder groups to create the changes that resulted. Discussions were held and differences were reconciled *prior* to legislation being introduced and passed. As a result, we had an Act that brought sweeping change that we all supported. Implementation of the BEST program, professional development committees, and changes to the structure of certification were more easily made and implemented because teachers, administrators, the State Department of Education, and other stakeholders were all working toward agreed-upon goals.

In its early years, the BEST program was successful because teachers were actively involved in district committees that planned and implemented major aspects of the program. In districts, professional development for teachers was much more effective than it often is today, again because teachers were actively involved in district committees that planned and implemented programs.

Over the years, as federal and state mandates increased, and funding decreased, teachers were shut out of the planning and implementation processes more and more, and the

quality of programs declined. Despite CEA efforts to raise concerns, promote change, and work collaboratively with the SDE, some change has only occurred by resorting to the legislative process.

All of us should have learned from those experiences. Over the past year and a half, CEA's working relationship with the Commissioner and Associate Commissioner has become very positive, and we often share the same goals. CEA wants to build on that success, and bring teachers' voices and opinions into more processes to move change forward. The certification regulations change is the most current and challenging of those changes. While it is the responsibility of the State Board to establish policy, we know from experience that, when teachers are involved in formulating change they believe in, they embrace it and make it work. We know CT teachers have a lot to bring to the discussion about what preparation is needed to work in today's schools, and what is appropriate certification for the roles they play. We have thousands of teachers who have advanced degrees in a variety of content areas; who serve as leaders in, or are actively involved in, state and national professional associations; who write and publish in professional journals; and who teach on the college level, especially in teacher preparation programs. They bring this experience into their classrooms every day, which has a positive impact on their work with students.

Now is the time for the State Board to listen carefully to what these professionals believe will result from the proposed changes to certification. Their knowledge and insight comes from years of experience; taken collectively, they can't all be wrong. In the future, CEA would like teachers to be actively involved in the process of *creating* change from the beginning, not just *reacting* to proposed change. Using more collaborative processes will move

us more quickly through the change process, bringing benefits to our students sooner, and helping to close the achievement gap more quickly.