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Good afternoon Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

My name is Lucinda Young. I am the Chief Lobbyist with the Washington Education Association and one of my responsibilities is teacher quality and licensure. I am speaking in strong support of an independent educator standards board.

The Washington State Legislature significantly changed the licensure system for all K-12 certificated staff a decade ago by establishing a two tiered licensure process. The State Board of Education (SBE) continued to set the rules and regulations for the licensure system. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) existed only as an advisory body to the SBE. Although SBE members took their job seriously, none were educators. This lack of expertise and knowledge of the classroom set up the new licensure system for failure. Requirements, rules, and regulations for getting and renewing a license changed frequently, were unattainable and chaotic. Both educators and higher education institutions responsible for licensing programs protested frequently and loudly. Teachers were beginning to choose leaving the profession instead of interpreting and completing a failing licensure system.

Through legislation created by the leadership of the Governor, a bi-partisan group of legislators, and the organizations representing the teachers and principals directly impacted by the licensure system, the PESB became an independent licensure board with full authority to create rules and regulations for licensure and preparation programs in 2006. This Board consists of practicing classroom teachers, Educational Support Associates (counselors, school psychologist, etc.) principals, superintendents, college deans, and at least one citizen representative. They meet every other month for two days addressing their specific legislatively-driven responsibilities related to detailed rules regulating licensure and preparation programs.

Educators go through a rigorous interview process prior to gubernatorial appointment to the PESB. School Districts support educators who serve on the PESB as they are recognized as excellent, master teachers among their peers.

Why did the members of the Washington Education Association support and actively work to gain an independent educator standards board? The vast majority of professional standards boards are made up of practitioners who understand the profession, have full awareness of the demands and knowledge needed to be successful in the field, and can successfully determine, through research and discussion, what requirements will improve their profession. Teachers were demanding the same regard and responsibility for their profession, as the alternative was not working. The PESB is now populated with individuals who understand exactly what impact the rules and regulations they create will have on their classrooms, and most importantly, their students. Teachers graduate from pre-service programs better prepared for today's classroom. And most importantly, teachers who move from the residency to the professional certificate in Washington report that the process did improve their teaching abilities.

When the PESB became an independent board, the Legislature clarified the standards for licensure and education preparatory programs, thus giving the PESB clear direction and focus for making expedient and significant policy changes. Some of significant and relevant changes the WA state PESB has accomplished are as follows:

- Setting higher, more rigorous and relevant standards for preparation, endorsement and licensure renewal:
 - Complete revision and process for continuous updating of all 33 teacher subject endorsement standards;
 - Evidence-based standards of practice, requiring demonstration of positive impact on student learning as a result of good instruction; and,
 - Incorporating cultural competency and language acquisition for all educators.
- Fundamentally changing teacher preparation program accountability:

- Moving to a framework of evidence of program impact to determine review and approval, with an emphasis on production of effective teachers as measured by impact on students;
 - Requiring programs to collect and manage structured data and report information routinely that supports program accountability; and,
 - Advancing a best practice model that includes improved analysis of key indicators as reported by programs.
- Expanding Pathways:
- Created Educator Retooling programs for teachers to add subject endorsements to strengthen effectiveness and help meet district need; and,
 - Established the Recruiting Washington Teachers Program which has supported 155 students from underrepresented populations toward pursuit of postsecondary education and a teaching career.
- Engaging research community to inform PESB policy
- PESB is the only education agency in WA with a research advisory to guide policy development.

We recognize that what has been developed and implemented by the professional standards board in Washington State may not work for educators in other states. We all have different needs. What we *have* found is that Washington State has successfully initiated many progressive changes in the K-12 public school system during the past several years, due to moving the work of setting and implementing educator standards into the hands of practicing educators. Developing a licensure system that is directed, monitored and continually assessed by an independent board populated by practicing professional educators has been crucial to continually improving education in our state. New teachers enter their first classroom better prepared for the challenges awaiting them. Experienced educators moving from the first tier of licensure, residency certification, to the second tier, professional certification do so by completing a process specifically created by educators to improve and build upon the skill set of active educators. WEA would and does strongly recommend that Connecticut also adopt an independent standards board.