

Remarks of Valerie Teggi
Special Education Teacher
Northwestern Middle-High School, Region 7 school district

Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education concerning
proposed changes to certification in Special Education

April 27, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Valerie Teggi, and I am employed by Region 7 as a special education teacher. I am composing this testimony for the hearing in Litchfield Connecticut on April 27, 2010. Additionally, I am writing as not only a veteran special education teacher, but also as a parent of a special needs youngster. I am strongly opposed to the projected certification changes for special education teachers for a variety of reasons.

If you require all special education teachers to earn a Master's degree before they can practice special education, you will be responsible for a grave disservice to Connecticut's children, as this requirement will no doubt cause a shortage of special education teachers. Currently, special education teachers are well prepared for their duties via a comprehensive Bachelor's degree program, and are able to start their career upon earning this degree, after which they can then get their masters with the help of the school system. This allows for enthusiastic young teachers to immediately begin working with special needs youngsters. I wonder how many of these folks will decide that it is worthwhile to go into special education upon earning their bachelor's

degree? Certainly many of them will decide that it is simply not worth it to be saddled with these additional proposed requirements and expenses?

This shortage will put the responsibility of implementing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) onto the regular classroom teacher. As a parent of a special education child, I am telling you that this is absolutely unacceptable. Teachers will not be able to implement IEPs for their special education youngsters, while continuing to provide quality instruction to their other students. This is why, with inclusion, there is an obligation for special education teachers to be in the classroom providing direct support to our children. Moreover, there must be a full continuum of services provided by special education teachers for children who cannot be successful in mainstream classes. These programs are staffed by special education teachers who work directly with children. I am afraid that the certification proposed by the State Department of Education will certify special educators who will merely oversee the programs of children, causing fine programs to fall by the wayside. Please rethink this proposal for the sake of my child, and all of Connecticut's children.

Furthermore, I have not heard about any grandfather clauses. I have practiced special education for more than thirty years. I have a Bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University in Special Education. I have a Master's degree from Walden University in Middle Level Education. I am currently certified in special education (065), and middle level mathematics (229). I cannot believe that the State

Board of Education would strip me of my certifications after serving Connecticut in good faith for more than thirty years.

Yes, I did read that the certification board would forgive up to nine credits in the pursuit of a more current certification. How insulting! After thirty plus years of being certified, I now have to meet your new certification requirements? Teachers who graduated when I did are being told that they have to satisfy new requirements or lose our certifications of thirty years? How dare you entertain certification changes that will render us neither qualified nor certified? I am appalled that you would consider such an unconscionable change in certification law. I urge you to rethink this, and design a clear Grandfather Clause that will shield your existing special education teachers from such a shocking situation, lest they be left behind after serving the state of Connecticut for so many years. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.