# *Testimony of*

**Kristen Basiaga**

**Glastonbury Educator**

*Before the*

**Education Committee**

*Re:*

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

March 13, 2024

Dear Senators McCrory and Berthel, Representatives Currey and McCarty, and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Kristen Basiaga and I’m the President of the Glastonbury Education Association. Today I am submitting testimony in support of SB 381.

In 2023, UConn TCPCG graduated less than ten new science teachers. My school, Glastonbury High School, alone has over twenty science teachers. If there’s no teacher shortage in your home district, just wait a few more years. Across the state, educators are seeing positions being left open because there just isn’t anyone in the pipeline. The teacher shortage is real but, most importantly, it is avoidable if your committee and colleagues take steps to enhance our profession.

For those of you with children, would you honestly encourage your child to pay for four years of college only to make $45k per year? Or get a master’s degree only to start at $47k?

This bill, SB 381, combats the teacher shortage by establishing a minimum starting salary of $60k. Our young people need to know that education is a viable career option that will help them pay off their student loans, pay for childcare, or save for a down payment on a house.

 Taking on the teacher shortage also means respecting and investing in our current educators. This includes COVID recognition payments for every single educator who worked through the pandemic. We turned our profession on its head with only days’ notice. We engaged when so many others worked safely from home. We put ourselves at great personal risk in order to show up for our students. One of my friends caught COVID five times while working through the pandemic. Then it came to state recognition, teachers were left out of CT Heroes Pay. It was a slap in the face. Educators deserve Heroes Pay for our contributions during COVID.

Furthermore, investing in our current educators means paying us like professionals. When I surveyed the members of the Glastonbury Education Association, nearly 50% of respondents listed teacher salary enhancement as a critical improvement to the profession. While SB 381 does not include teacher salary enhancement beyond starting salaries, I want the committee to seriously consider the long-term effects of investing in educator salaries now. This is not an unprecedented action. The Teaching Enhancement Act of 1986 created three related incentive grant programs to improve teacher salaries across the board. It kept the Connecticut education system afloat for almost forty years. But here we are again. In negotiations, teachers are fighting for 2% and 3% wage increases while last year’s inflation rate was almost 9%. If your committee is serious about teacher retention, we need to be able to afford to stay in these positions.

I cannot emphasize enough that the full consequences of the teacher shortage are yet to be realized. They can, however, be avoided. The minimum starting salary established in SB 381 would encourage more young people to become educators. Current teachers would finally be recognized for their work during COVID. Finally, SB 381’s provisions on just cause, good faith reporting to DCF, and neutral arbitrators would significantly improve the profession as a whole. Please support SB 381.

Thank for your time,

Kristen Basiaga

Glastonbury Education Association