

**Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey
(TEACHNJ) Act
March 5, 2012**

Teachers are not against tenure reform; teachers are afraid of tenure reform. Their first concern is that the decision of tenure is going to rely on an evaluation system that does not yet exist except in some districts which are piloting a program. In many of these pilot districts these systems are being developed with limited teacher voice. The new system will include a student outcomes section with a percentage of the rating to be based on student growth scores from a annual standardized assessment that is currently in development. This is all taking place while we are transitioning from New Jersey Core Content Standards to National Core Standards. You are asking a population of educational professionals to embrace systematic changes in their due process rights. With this new legislation you are asking them to trust you to protect them from arbitrary and capricious termination while the conversations around them focus on firing teachers.

In regard to this specific legislation there are many things to like , including the language on mentoring, professional development, teacher privacy, and especially, many of the components of the teacher development and evaluation process (**TDE**). We share the goal in this bill to create a new TDE and tenure rules that teachers will embrace because such rules help to elevate their profession.

We believe the one area that needs to be developed throughout the bill is the role of teacher voice. While this bill gives some voice to teachers there is an imbalance of power favoring the opinion of the building administrator with input from one teacher, which in reality is not much different from the system we currently are functioning in. We strongly believe we need to develop criteria to identify a teacher leadership team that will receive professional development and serve with the principal to assist in the building decision making process. The criteria and responsibilities for these teams should be developed in a collaborative manner by a district labor-management team.

We agree with the legislation that a TDE should not be based on just one observation, but we recognize in most schools and districts multiple classroom visits are burdensome and could result in undermining the whole intent of the new evaluation system.. Therefore AFTNJ believes there should be an opportunity for districts to develop a peer review and assistance program similar to that currently in place in Toledo, Ohio. Without a peer review system in place we truly believe there must be substantive due process in place in the teacher development and evaluation process.

These are just a few of our concerns and solutions. AFTNJ is committed to working with Senator Ruiz and the Legislature in developing a tenure reform bill that ensures all of our classrooms in New Jersey have an effective teacher in place so all our children in New Jersey can achieve and reach their potential. We hope to continue the dialog to create a bill that is good for kids and fair to their teachers.

Donna M. Chiera, President, AFTNJ
629 Amboy Avenue, Edison, NJ 08837
732-661-9393