

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-351 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A JUST CAUSE STANDARD FOR TEACHER TERMINATION DECISIONS AND REQUIRING TERMINATION HEARINGS TO

Title: BE BEFORE A NEUTRAL ARBITRATOR.

Vote Date: 3/17/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The reason for this bill is to require that teacher terminations follow the "just cause" standard, which is a higher standard than the "due and sufficient cause" currently required and would require that the process go through neutral arbitration. At present, Boards of Education can terminate a teacher for "due and sufficient cause" for a wide range of reasons, including inefficiency, incompetence, insubordination, moral misconduct, disability, elimination of a position to another teacher, or other due and sufficient reasons. It also ensures that teacher terminations utilize the neutral arbitration process, as the supporters of this bill claim that this will ensure teachers are not fired arbitrarily and for potentially inappropriate reasons.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

LCO 3327 removes the "just cause" standard, and ensures that the standard for termination has to match the standard applied under other terms of the existing collective bargaining agreement for the teacher in question.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Charlene Tucker, Commissioner, CSDE: Submitted testimony stating section 1 contains revisions to sections 10-151 of the general statutes that govern the termination of teachers. The provision would have an impartial hearing officer's decision be binding upon the school board. This would align with terminations processes utilized with all other public employee unions. Section 1 would also convert what are currently administrative appeals to the

Superior Court from hearing officer decisions to the standard used in appeals from arbitration decisions.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Leslie Blatteau, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers: Ms. Blatteau is in support of the bill because it strengthens Connecticut's ability to recruit and keep educators. The bill will ensure that teachers are treated fairly during the hiring process and during employment. She states that this bill is very important during this time when less college graduates are considering becoming educators.

Leslie Blatteau, President, NHFT Local 933: Submitted testimony in support stating the bill ensures that educators have the right to due process. They explain that less college graduates are considering teaching and that these protections would help retain educators in the classroom.

Ed Thibodeau, Connecticut Education Association: Mr. Thibodeau is in support of the bill. He claims that the bill contains important safeguards that teachers lack. He states that in the current process The Board of Education's administrators make the decision to terminate a teacher, however this is not a neutral party. He claims that this process is unfair, and many good teachers feel that their jobs are at stake because of it. In his ten years of experience, he has noticed that it is easier to fire a teacher than to suspend one.

Kate Dias, President, CEA and Adrienne, DeLucca, General Counsel, CEA: Submitted testimony in support as the bill would bring long overdue improvements to due process for teachers in disciplinary proceedings. Since this process is governed by state statute rather than collective bargaining it must be changed with bills. Teacher's discipline is governed by due and sufficient cause rather than Just Cause that most other public employees are governed under. The bill would change that to Just Cause and allow for a neutral arbitrator's decision to be binding.

32 Educators: Multiple educators submitted nearly identical testimony in support of SB 351. They stated the bill would strengthen CT's ability to recruit and retain educators by treating them fairly when they are facing disciplinary decisions. They stated employment decisions should be based on facts not politics and supported Just Cause being added to the teacher tenure act.

- Audra Allen
- Brian Hassan
- Scott Minnick
- Victoria Phillips
- Dave Duff
- Jennifer Larsen
- Adam Phaijah
- Daniela Sturm
- Lisa Corrone
- Doranne Koval
- Steven Patarini
- David Stockwell
- Shana Golden
- Jennifer Breault
- Emily Plude
- Lisa Tryon
- Meghan Geary
- Margaret Layman
- Kathryn Petruzzi
- Ron Benner
- Amber Harris
- Sandra Mangan
- Lucy Regan
- Melissa Winalski
- Stacey Guertin
- Asdrubal Luis
- Stephen Reisinger
- Jaimie Lindenmuth
- Jeffrey Helming
- Allison Pascucci
- Amy Stewart

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Patrice McCarthy, Executive Director, CAFE, and Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, CAPSS: They submitted testimony in opposition on behalf of the boards of education and superintendents they represent. They state the bill would strip the Boards of their long standing decision making authority on who would be teaching the children enrolled in their schools. It would change a provision in the teacher tenure law that would make the unelected hearing officers make the final decision that would be binding to both parties. They state this would deprive the boards of educations the ability to establish standards for teachers to remain in employment. The only recourse for a board of educations would have on a bad decision would be to file an application to vacate an arbitration award. SB 351 would change the provision permitting termination from other due and sufficient reasons to just cause standards of review. They state however that just cause is a standard regarding discipline in the world of industrial labor relations and would be inapt because some terminations are not disciplinary in nature.

Drew Michael McWeeney, Assistant Professor, CT State College Norwalk: Submitted testimony in opposition and stated the bill was contradictory. He stated Just Cause is not defined in statute and would not add to anything when the ground for termination is already specified. McWeeney takes issue with both parties sharing equally for hearing fees since there is no exceptions for it. He states the section where when a termination is based on ineffectiveness the hearing will be limited to twelve hours does not make sense to them as normal litigation often takes months. There are no qualification requirements for arbitrators specified.

Reported by: Lawrence Sanchez & Olivia Buczak Date: 3/26/2026