

Testimony of
Jeff Leake
Connecticut Education Association

Before the
Appropriations Committee

Re:
HB 6555 AAC LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT AND APPROVAL OF COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS

March 8, 2021

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jeff Leake and I am the President of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents educators in over 1,000 public schools across Connecticut.

CEA thanks the committee for considering legislation regarding the distribution of funds available to the state via the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The funds offer the opportunity for the state to address the direct impact of COVID-19, as well as to improve schools' abilities to make schools safer from infectious disease and other airborne dangers.

We support a process that will ensure that democratic participation helps to inform policymakers on the most appropriate uses and distribution of funds. We urge policymakers to consider the following use for these federal funds:

1. **Fund a program for HVAC inspection, maintenance, repair, and improvements** to mitigate conditions conducive to the spread of infectious disease and other ailments.
2. **Increase staffing support for counselors, social workers, and mental health professionals** in the wake of the pandemic.
3. **Promote student engagement, support for English learners, and the availability of enrichment activities** to help students recover and excel.
4. **Improve social and emotional support for students and staff** by expanding access to training and resources that can be incorporated into schools and classrooms.
5. **Incorporate more cultural awareness** by providing access to resources and training that help educators address issues of racism and social justice that have affected students in our communities, especially during the pandemic.
6. **Provide supplemental special education support** through additional staffing to help schools provide the intensity of services that were unable to be provided during remote learning.

7. **Supplement student support don't supplant it** by ensuring that federal relief funds are not used to replace ECS funds or local funds for schools by continuing the ECS phase-in and sending funds directly to boards of education.

Thank you for your consideration.