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Testimony of

Ray Rossomando  
Connecticut Education Association  
Before the

Banking Committee

Re:

SB 271: AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENT LOANS

March 10, 2022

Senator Miller, Representative Doucette, Senator Berthel, Representative Delnicki, and members of the Banking Committee, my name is Ray Rossomando, and I serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents over 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state. Additionally, we work closely with aspiring educators in our teacher preparation programs and offer “Degrees not Debt” student loan guidance to thousands of aspiring, early, and mid-career teachers facing burdening student loans.

CEA supports the Hero Loan Subsidy Program in SB 271, particularly the student loan incentives to recruit more licensed social workers. However, we ask committee members to consider additional incentives to attract more certified **school social workers** into the field. We also ask that committee members include **school guidance counselors, school psychologists, and special education teachers** given shortages across the state in these positions.

The recommendations from professional associations are 250:1 for school counselors and social workers, and 500:1 for school psychologists. According to these standards, Connecticut is understaffed by certified school social workers (580:1), school counselors (457:1), and school psychologists (548:1). Additionally, for school psychologists, two-thirds of low-wealth districts (DRG H) are understaffed in grades K-8 (more than 500 students per school psychologist).<sup>1,2</sup> All of the least-wealthy districts (DRG I) are understaffed with school psychologists.<sup>3</sup> For school counselors, 100% of the lower wealth districts (DRG H and I) are woefully understaffed for children in grades K-8.

CEA supports the efforts by legislators to promote more affordable pathways to becoming certified staff who can be available to address the mental health needs of children in our schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency (School District) Universe Survey", 2020-21 v.1a.

<sup>[2]</sup> DRG H = Ansonia, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Meriden, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, West Haven.

<sup>[3]</sup> DRG I = Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, Windham.