



Connecticut Education Association
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street, Hartford, CT 06106
860-525-5641 • 800-842-4316 • www.cea.org
An affiliate of the National Education Association

Policy, Research, & Government Relations
Ray Rossomando, Director
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 525-5641, 800-842-4316

Governance
Kate Dias • President
Joslyn DeLancey • Vice President
Tara Flaherty • Secretary
Stephanie Wanzer • Treasurer
Executive Director
Donald E. Williams Jr.

Testimony of

Robyn Kaplan-Cho

Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Appropriations Committee

**Re: HB 6489 AN ACT CONCERNING RETIREE MEMBERS OF THE
TEACHERS' RETIREMENT BOARD**

March 28, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Robyn Kaplan-Cho, and I have been the Retirement Specialist for CEA for over 28 years, assisting our active and retired teacher members with issues related to the State Teachers' Retirement Board (STRB).

CEA supports the addition of one new retired seat to the STRB. This bill would add two new retiree seats. If a second seat is added, it should be for an active teacher, given that active teachers comprise 60% of the STRB membership, while retired teachers comprise 40%. In fact, if there were one additional active teacher and one additional retired teacher added, their representation on the STRB would be proportionate to their share of the membership.

Moreover, this bill would allow only retirees who are on one of the TRB health plans (which are only for retirees on Medicare) to run for the seats. We oppose any restrictions as to who can run for a seat on the STRB. As a result of this bill, retirees who are under age 65 and thus not yet on the STRB's Medicare plan as well as any retiree who may be on a spouse's insurance would not be allowed to run for an STRB seat. There is no rational basis for excluding certain retirees from being able to run for an STRB seat based on their health plan status or choice.

Also, the bill changes who elects retired teachers to the STRB by no longer allowing active teachers to vote in a retired election. The law has always allowed all members of the system (both active and retired) to vote for each other in all elections. Active teachers certainly do have a vested interest in actions taken by the STRB, including retiree health care decisions which will impact them directly as soon as they retire. In fact, I know that many active teachers make their

decision to retire based on what health care options they will have once they retire. So active teachers absolutely should be allowed to vote for the retiree seats, and vice versa. It is a fair and reasonable system and does not need to change.

Finally, if any seats are added, CEA supports having those terms begin concurrent with the next election of the respective group in order to avoid incurring the \$50,000 required for the STRB to hold each election.

Thank you for your time and consideration.