

Testimony of

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Connecticut Education Association

Before a meeting of the

Education Committee

HB 6881 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Education Statutes Related to Educator Compensation and Paraeducators

HB 6884 An Act Concerning the Recruitment, Retention and Enhancement of the Teaching Profession

March 15, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and members of the Education Committee, I am Donald Williams, Executive Director of the Connecticut Education Association.

Thank you for raising House Bills 6881 and 6884, which would dramatically improve the teaching profession with the salaries and working conditions educators deserve.

It has been a year of crisis and teacher shortages. The number of experienced teachers who have moved up their plans to retire has increased, while the number of college students planning to be teachers has been dropping.

We should not be surprised. Salaries and support have fallen behind. Other jobs with similar requirements pay much more and provide more flexibility, better working conditions, and less stress.

Yet few jobs are as important as teaching the next generation of adults. We rely on educators to inspire students, create the building blocks of our economy, and build a better future. If we think about it, it's because of a teacher that we've all had doors opened in our lives and opportunities available as adults. That's why we must invest in educators.

House Bill 6881 would provide \$600 million to increase educator salaries that have fallen behind.

This is similar to the historic and bipartisan Education Enhancement Act of 1986. Thirty-seven years ago, the courageous work of Democrats and Republicans resulted in decades of positive outcomes and effects. Today, Connecticut has the fiscal means to make that commitment, and teachers desperately need that step forward.

As one of our teachers said today:

“I’m tired of watching teachers leave because they can get paid more doing something else while being treated better and not having as much stress. We’ve lost so many teachers recently, and there seems to be no end in sight. Please help save our profession.”

Another said:

“We are paid less than professionals with equal schooling, and we work into the evenings and weekends. If Connecticut wants to attract and keep teachers, then treat them as professionals. Please listen to our voices and support what we do.”

This is a rare moment that must not be wasted. You have the power to forge a bipartisan coalition of Democrats and Republicans at a time when our state has the dollars needed to lift up educators and make historic, lasting change for the teaching profession. Thank you for your help.