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Testimony of

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Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Education Committee

Re:

SB 1513 An Act Concerning Aspiring Educators

March 19, 2025

Representative Leeper, Senator McCrory, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Elizabeth Sked, and I am the Education Issues Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). In my role at CEA, I serve as the state organizer for CEA's Aspiring Educators Program (AEP). I am fortunate to work with Aspiring Educators across our state on a daily basis.

CEA supports SB 1513: An Act Concerning Aspiring Educators. We firmly believe that providing stipends for student teaching is a critical step in strengthening our teacher pipeline and addressing the growing teacher shortage in our state. College students in just about every other occupation that requires internships get paid for their work — why not aspiring educators?

Aspiring educators face significant financial hurdles on their journey to the classroom. The student teaching experience, often a full-time, unpaid commitment, presents a substantial barrier, particularly for candidates from historically underrepresented and low-income backgrounds. Many student teachers must forgo paid employment for an entire semester or longer while they fulfill their required placements, making it financially unfeasible for some to complete their certification. Others are forced to juggle multiple jobs just to make ends meet,

further stretching themselves thin. By offering stipends to student teachers, SB 1513 would help alleviate this financial burden and create a more equitable path into the profession. This investment would ensure that talented, passionate individuals are not deterred from becoming educators simply because they cannot afford to work for free.

As we have testified regularly, the teacher shortage in Connecticut is no longer a looming threat, it is a reality. School districts across our state are struggling to recruit and retain qualified educators, particularly in high-need areas such as special education and STEM. Providing financial support for aspiring educators will help attract a more diverse and talented pool of future teachers, leading to stronger retention rates and a more stable workforce. By incentivizing student teaching through stipends, we can ensure that more individuals complete their preparation programs and enter the workforce fully equipped to succeed in the classroom.

We need only look to other states for successful examples of how such programs can be implemented. Across the country, states have recognized the need to financially support aspiring educators by providing direct funding for student teaching. Some examples include the following.

Colorado – Eligible students in a 16-week residency may receive \$11,000 and students in a 32-week residency may receive \$22,000.

Kentucky – Eligible students can receive up to a \$5,000 stipend for their final semester.

Maryland – Eligible students receive a \$20,000 annual stipend.

Michigan – Eligible students receive a \$9,600 stipend per semester of student teaching.

Pennsylvania – Eligible students can receive up to \$15,000 in stipends.

These initiatives have helped to grow the teacher pipeline by making the profession more accessible to a broader range of candidates, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. If we want to remain competitive and ensure that every student in Connecticut has access to highly qualified teachers, we must take similar steps to support those entering the field.

The passage SB 1513 would not only help aspiring teachers afford their training but would also strengthen Connecticut's ability to attract and retain a high-quality, diverse educator workforce. It would send a powerful message that Connecticut values its educators and is committed to fostering the next generation of teachers. By providing stipends for student teaching, we remove unnecessary barriers to the profession and take a significant step toward solving our teacher shortage.

We urge this committee to support SB 1513 and invest in the future of education. Thank you for your time and consideration.