



Connecticut Education Association

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Governance

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Testimony of

Kate Dias & Joslyn DeLancey

Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Education Committee

Re:

HB 6866 AA Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Education

**SB 1288 AA Implementing the Recommendations of the State Department of
Education**

Senator McCrory, Representative Leeper, Senator Berthel, Representative Zupkus, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Joslyn DeLancey, and I am Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), which represents educators in over 150 school districts across the state. Today I am testifying on SB 1288 and HB 6866.

**SB 1288 AA Implementing the Recommendations of the State Department of
Education**

CEA supports SB 1288.

SB 1288 addresses various areas of interest raised by the State Department of Education. We support the establishment of criteria for local school districts to award a Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement to students, which will be

shown on their diplomas. We commend the work of Representative Brown and the Civics Education, Civics Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force. Over the past 20 years, we have seen a deemphasis on civics education, ultimately weakening how graduates from our schools understand and engage in our democratic process. We support efforts to reverse this trend and to prioritize civics education and engagement.

SB 1288 would repeal a provision in statute that requires certain elementary school teachers to complete a survey on the Foundations of Reading Instruction. We support this repeal.

More than a decade ago, the legislature mandated that certain elementary school teachers complete this time-consuming survey, and the Foundations of Reading Instruction was incorporated into education preparation programs. As the state, under the leadership of Sen. Miller, works to improve reading instruction and end vestiges of failed instructional strategies, redirecting the time and resources devoted to the survey to more professional development in reading instruction would be a win for students, educators, and the state.

SB 1288 also addresses special education costs, including provisions regarding services provided by private providers and the apportionment of costs between local school districts and certain schools of choice.

CEA supports efforts to increase the transparency and oversight of private provider costs. CEA has also submitted testimony in support of Governor Lamont's proposal in SB 1244, to establish special education spending reports and maximum private provider rates. In that testimony we provide more detailed data on the fast-rising costs of private providers, as well as some evidence of excessive profiteering. Reining in the significant amount of funds being sent to private providers is critical to ensuring that there are sufficient resources for all students who need support services.

HB 6866 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Education

CEA strongly opposes Section 18 of HB 6866, which proposes reducing the state's contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Board health benefit plan from one-third to one-quarter for the next two years.

By reducing the state's statutory share, the reduction shifts the financial burden to retired educators who would have to absorb future cost increases in the plan. It could also further increase the costs to active teachers for funding the retiree health fund, thereby shifting responsibility for the fund's solvency to educators while the state benefits from cost savings.

At a time when Connecticut faces widespread challenges in teacher recruitment and retention, the state should be looking for ways to ease financial pressures on educators – not deepen them. Instead of diverting these savings back to the state for discretionary use, we urge lawmakers to prioritize the needs of teachers by maintaining the state’s one-third contribution level.

Supporting and retaining educators requires tangible commitments. We strongly urge the legislature to reject this proposal and ensure that teachers receive the support and stability they have rightfully earned.