

Written Testimony of

Tom Nicholas, Vice President
Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

HB7110 An Act Concerning Enhancing Classroom Safety and School Climate

February 22, 2019

Good afternoon Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Tom Nicholas Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association the states' largest teacher's union made up of both active and retired teachers.

I have dual certification pre-K through eight and as a school social worker. I would like to share some of my experiences from last year when I was working as a school social worker.

In just one month a student said he was going to bring a gun to school and shoot me. I had been hit or kicked 15 times, spat on twice, and received a concussion and fracture of L-3 of my vertebrae after slipping on snow while returning a student who ran out of the school building.

It was a weekly occurrence for one of my students to run out of the room and race at full speed down the hallways tearing up bulletin boards as he went. We were told not to stop him but just let him run. I feared for his safety because if he ever ran into a wall he would have seriously injured himself.

Another student often became dysregulated and would throw anything he could get his hands on throughout the room. During the course of the year this student's teacher had to clear the students from her classroom on six different occasions. This caused a great deal of loss of instruction time and trauma for all the children in the classroom.

I finished the year off with a bang as it was field day and two third graders and one first grader decided they did not want to participate in the hoola hoop event but went running full bore into the woods. A colleague and I had to run through the woods and ended up in a neighborhood more than a half mile away. We had to call the police and they returned us to school.

From my experiences it is the younger populations whose levels of anxiety and dysregulation have just exploded. This bill is in no way punitive but seeks to provide help and greater counseling supports for these children in need. I implore you to support HB7110. Thank you.