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Testimony of  
**Kate Field and Michele Ridolfi O'Neill**  
**Connecticut Education Association**

Before the  
**Education Committee**

March 18, 2019

Re:  
**HB 7352 AAC Minor Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes**  
**HB 7356 AAC School Security**

**SB 1067 AA Establishing a Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing  
Dyslexia Instruction and Training**

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. We are Kate Field and Michele Ridolfi O'Neill, staff members of the Connecticut Education Association's policy and research department. Please accept our joint testimony on behalf of CEA.

HB 7352

**Section 2**, which CEA supports for its inclusion of social-emotional learning in the list of curriculum made available by the State Department of Education, also requires that climate change be taught from elementary school through high school. This latter provision is current practice given that the New Generation Science Standards adopted by the state already accomplish this.

**Section 3**, which CEA opposes, would lengthen from 10 to 20 months the period in which teachers who have received tenure in one school district would be able to achieve tenure in a Priority School District.

This provision was put into law to encourage more experienced teachers to join faculties in the state's neediest school districts. It did this by reducing uncertainty. Awarding tenure provides assurances that teachers will not be treated unfairly or arbitrarily dismissed; it ensures that due process will be followed should a district wish to terminate a teacher's contract. The current provision should remain intact so teachers who transfer into our neediest districts are afforded the peace of mind that due process can provide.

**Section 4**, which CEA supports, would remove the requirement that teacher preparation programs use the "*edTPA*" assessment system sold by Pearson Education, Inc. It is a standardized method of assessing pre-service teachers prior to graduating from a teacher preparation program. We believe that *edTPA* is a costly and burdensome system that does not

adequately help pre-service teachers improve their potential quality of teaching. It should not be statutorily required.

**Section 7** would provide for a statewide study of safety issues related to the work performed by public school paraprofessionals. CEA supports this provision and believes that classroom safety is a critically important issue to address. Incidents of violence and other classroom disruptions are on the rise, particularly in the earliest grades, and pose safety risks to all students and staff, and indicate unmet needs of students who act out. Section 7, in addition to other bills under the committee’s consideration, would increase attention to reversing this trend.

**Section 8** proposes a pilot principal induction program. CEA supports the concept of principal induction contained in this section.

School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions.<sup>1</sup> About 25 percent of a student’s academic gain can be attributed to an effective principal.<sup>2</sup> And, school leadership is **the** most important condition affecting teacher retention. Teachers who indicated they plan to remain teaching in their school were twice as likely to also indicate they work in a trusting and supportive environment.<sup>3</sup>

However, nearly 30 percent of principals in the country’s most challenging schools quit each year; more than half of all principals leave their jobs by their third year. The ones who remain in the profession often move to schools that serve more affluent students. One of the top reasons they cite for leaving their positions is “lack of support and guidance.” On average student achievement declines for two straight years after a principal leaves the school.<sup>4</sup>

To the degree that the pilot proposed in this bill informs a more formal future induction program, we believe that there is great potential to address principal turnover and enhance the effectiveness of school leadership.

## HB 7356

CEA supports sections 1 and 2, which extend school security infrastructure provisions to early childhood centers and proposes a study on the employment and arming of school security.

Section 3 adds “doors that can be locked from inside the classroom” to the list of school security criteria necessary for qualifying for a school infrastructure grant. While well intended, and a policy that has been adopted in some other areas, CEA urges the committee to consider unintended consequences that could result from teachers and administrators potentially being locked out of a classroom by one or more students.

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<sup>1</sup> Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership.

<sup>2</sup> Tyre, P (2015). Why do more than fifty percent of principals quit after five years?  
<https://hechingerreport.org/why-do-more-than-half-of-principals-quit-after-five-years/> .

<sup>3</sup> Hirsch, E., Freitas, C., Church, K., & Villar, A. (2008). Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey: Creating school conditions where teachers stay and students thrive.

<sup>4</sup> Tyre, P (2015).

SB 1067

CEA appreciates the inclusion of teachers in this bill and asks the committee to include CEA as the organization responsible for bringing teacher representation to this new task force on dyslexia policy implementation.

Thank you.