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**Testimony of
Jeff Leake
President, Connecticut Education Association**

**RE: HB 6926, 6930, 6935, 6936
Oppose: HB 5637**

**Before the Labor Committee
February 21, 2019**

Good Morning Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor Committee. My name is Jeff Leake. I serve as President of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA is the largest teachers' union in Connecticut, representing tens of thousands of active and retired teachers. CEA's legislative priorities are informed by active and retired teachers who serve on the many member-driven committees and commissions of our organization.

We testify today in support of House Bills 6926, 6930, 6935, and 6936.
We oppose House Bill 5637.

Over the last few decades, the labor-management relationship has become increasingly unbalanced. It's no wonder that across the country, wages of working families have not kept pace with inflation, and employees' share of health insurance costs has increased. Meanwhile, job and income security have declined, leaving more working families living paycheck-to-paycheck, one economic or health care set-back away from bankruptcy.

The bills we are supporting today would help restore the balance between teachers, other workers, and management to better ensure a fair economy. This need for balance has long been the rationale for ensuring workers, through their unions, can freely advocate for better working conditions.

The unions here today have come together to help restore this balance, for their workers, for our teachers, for the betterment of their employers, and for a fairer economy. The bills we support are important because they ensure that the relationship between unions and their members is collaborative, communicative, and inclusive. They push back against policies that serve to undermine this relationship, and ultimately harm the workplace. And they fight back against individuals with unimaginable wealth who actively spend it to expand their wealth at the expense of the 99 percent of citizens who are just trying to get by.

Over the past few months, union members, teachers included, have been targeted by misinformation from national organizations seeking to undermine them. They have received messages from their employers that violate labor law by seeking to unfairly meddle in union business. They have been strong-armed by employers to reject their union in contradiction to their own interests. In short, workers' rights have been outwardly violated.

The bills we support today help to ensure that teachers are treated fairly, and provided accurate and helpful information about their employment, their career, and their profession. They help to protect and hopefully restore the balance between workers and employers that helped build a middle class and foster prosperity across the nation. These bills help to end the lowering of the bar – the race to the bottom – for the working conditions and wages of Connecticut workers.