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Testimony of

Ray Rossomando

Before the Judiciary Committee

Re: SB 440 AA Protecting Employee Freedom of Speech and Conscience

March 15, 2019

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, and I am the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association, an organization representing active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts across Connecticut.

SB 440 would prevent employers from holding mandatory meetings that include discussion about politics, religion, or unions under the threat of discipline. CEA supports this bill. Our political environment has long been fraught with polarized political positions that have only worsened in recent years. This environment has made political speech more contentious, and political positions more intractable. It has expanded into how leaders of companies or other organizations seek to suppress employees' free speech and freedom to associate in unions. And it has bled into perceptions of diverse religious views and affiliations, resulting in bias, intimidation, and bigotry.

As a result, many employees fear being known by their employer as having positions contrary to those of their bosses, and feel threatened when management places them in a position that pits their job against their political or religious views.

SB 440 is a step in the right direction and toward better assurances that employees' freedoms and rights will be recognized and treated equally. After all, freedom and equal treatment are fundamental American values that we teach in school.