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Testimony of
Ray Rossomando
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Judiciary Committee

March 29, 2019

**Re: SB 792 AN ACT CREATING AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO STUDY
DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER IDENTITY OR EXPRESSION THAT
OCCURS IN WORKPLACES AND SCHOOLS IN THE STATE**

CEA supports SB 792

Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando. I serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), which represents thousands of active and retired teachers across the state who inform our legislative priorities.

CEA wholeheartedly supports SB 792. In addition to state laws, we suggest the proposed advisory committee also include within its scope federal laws germane to K-12 education that may overlap, or be in conflict with, state statutes on gender identity. For this reason, the advisory committee should consider including a member who is an expert on state and federal education laws and regulations.

Additionally, because of our organization's support for gender equity in K-12, we hope this committee will consider including CEA as a distinct member of the proposed advisory committee. CEA's governance structure includes our Human and Civil Rights Commission, which works to advance equity, including gender equity, in the state's public schools. We have also adopted organizational beliefs supporting gender equity and embracing diversity as instrumental to the fabric of our society. The following excerpts from our illustrate our adopted positions.

CEA believes that:

“Education should foster a vibrant, pluralistic society that authentically reflects diverse populations and cultural perspectives;”

*“Basic student rights include the right to safe and stable school environments; freedom of inquiry and expression; freedom of the press; due process; **gender equity**; freedom of association; freedom of peaceful assembly and petition; the*

right to participate in the governance of the school; freedom from discrimination; freedom from commercial exploitation; and equal educational opportunity;”

*“similarities and differences among race, ethnicity, color, national origin, language, geographic location, religion, gender, sexual orientation, **gender identity**, age, physical ability, size, occupation, and marital, parental, or economic status form the fabric of our society;” and*

*“all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, should be afforded equal opportunity and guaranteed a safe and inclusive environment within the public education system. The Association also believes that every school district should provide on-site counseling services and programs, staffed by trained personnel, for students who have questions or concerns about their sexual orientation/**gender identity**;” and*

*“school recruitment policies shall encourage a staff that is diverse ... [and] calls for the active recruitment, employment, and retention of licensed and qualified members of minority and **gender groups** to achieve and maintain diversity in all areas of educational employment.”*

We thank you for all the time you spend on this committee helping to make Connecticut a better place for all its residents.