
Testimony of

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Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

February 22, 2019

Re:

SB 814 AN ACT REQUIRING BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO CONDUCT TESTING OF WATER SUPPLIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE PRESENCE OF LEAD

HB 7112 AN ACT INCREASING THE AMOUNT A TOWN MAY DEPOSIT INTO A NONLAPSING ACCOUNT FOR UNEXPENDED EDUCATION FUNDS

HB 7109 AN ACT CONCERNING INTERDISTRICT MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM FUNDING

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Orlando Rodriguez. I serve as the Research and Policy Development Specialist for 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.

CEA supports SB 814, HB 7112, and HB 7109

SB 814: Scientific evidence has proven that exposure to lead severely decreases the ability of a child to learn and reason.¹ The consequences are permanent, and the effect on cognitive abilities continues through adulthood. In Connecticut, lead exposure among fourth-graders decreased their scores on standardized tests.² Children who are exposed to lead exhibit more aggression and increased criminal behavior as young adults.³ Furthermore, studies suggest that exposure to lead at an early age may increase the chance of getting Alzheimer's disease later in life.⁴

In 1986, federal law banned lead pipes in new building construction; however, the law was not effective in removing lead pipes in older buildings.⁵ There is ample evidence from thousands of communities across the U.S. that harmful levels of lead can still be found in drinking water.⁶ In Connecticut, the Hebron School District has to replace all pipes in Hebron Elementary School because the lead contamination is "everywhere."⁷ Senate Bill 814 is the first step in permanently removing lead from drinking water in all Connecticut schools.

We also wish to draw your attention to other concerns about unhealthy conditions in our schools. As you may have read in press reports, many Connecticut schools have become breeding grounds for mold and other conditions that negatively impact the health of students and staff. Schools in Stamford and

Westport have been shuttered. Such conditions ultimately impact the learning conditions within schools.

As the committee deliberates this bill, we ask that you also consider other unhealthy school conditions that require our attention.

HB 7112 allows towns to carry forward up to two percent of their K-12 education budget into the following fiscal year. CEA supports this bill because it requires that these monies be spent on only education expenses that must be approved by the board of education. CEA sees this requirement as necessary because C.G.S. § 10-262j specifies how much a town must *budget* for education services but does not specify how much must be *spent* on education. (Note the difference between budget and spend.) Consequently, property taxes collected for education do *not* have to be spent on education. For example, it is legal for a town to collect millions of dollars for local education and instead use that money to build a new city hall. Currently, the State Department of Education is investigating the City of Ansonia for using K-12 education funds for non-education purposes.⁸ We ask this committee to take the necessary steps to remove this loophole from state law and require all property taxes collected for education to be spent on education.

HB 7109: CEA supports House Bill 7109, which increases funding for magnet schools. We bring to the committee's attention that the governor's budget of 20 Feb 2019 reduces funding for magnet schools.⁹

We thank you for your time and interest.

Endnotes

¹ COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH. (2016, July). Prevention of Childhood Lead Toxicity. Pediatrics. Retrieved from American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/1/e20161493>

² Edwards, S., Anthopolos, R., & Miranda, M. (2013). The Impact of Early Childhood Lead Exposure on Educational Test Performance among Connecticut Schoolchildren Phase II Report. University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/School-Nursing/Publications/linking_lead_and_education_data_phaseii.pdf

³ Wolpaw Reyes, J. (2014). LEAD EXPOSURE AND BEHAVIOR: EFFECTS ON ANTISOCIAL AND RISKY BEHAVIOR AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS. Cambridge: NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w20366>

⁴ Eid, A., Bihagi, S. W., Renehan, W. E., & Zawia, N. H. (2016). Developmental lead exposure and lifespan alterations in epigenetic regulators and their correspondence to biomarkers of Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's & Dementia: Diagnosis, Assessment & Disease Monitoring 2, 123-131. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352872916000063>

⁵ Rabin, R. (2008, September). The Lead Industry and Lead Water Pipes "A MODEST CAMPAIGN". American Journal of Public Health, pp. 1584-1592. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2509614/>

⁶ Pell, M. B., & Schneyer, J. (2016, December 19). Thousands of U.S. Areas Afflicted with Lead Poisoning beyond Flint's. Reuters. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-lead-testing-specialreport/special-report-thousands-of-u-s-areas-afflicted-with-lead-poisoning-beyond-flints-idUSKBN1481BT>

⁷ McDermott, C. (2019, February 18). Hebron school lead fix: All pipes. Journal Inquirer. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from https://www.journalinquirer.com/towns/hebron/hebron-school-lead-fix-all-pipes/article_aa1aaa70-24b1-11e9-ba5a-fb14397b956c.html

⁸ CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION. (2018, December 5). Ansonia Section 10-4b Proceeding: Recommendation to Conduct Inquiry. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Board/BoardMaterials120518/Ansonia_Section_10_4b_Proceeding_Recommendation_to_Conduct_Inquiry.pdf?la=en

⁹ State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. (2019, February 20). FY 2020 – FY 2021 Biennial Budget. Retrieved from State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management: <https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Bud-Budgets/2020-2021-Biennial-Budget/FY-2020-2021-Biennial-Budget>