

Testimony of

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Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

HB 5378 An Act Concerning Integration of Social-Emotional Learning in Programs of Professional Development for Educators in Connecticut

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More than two years ago, our organization began a conversation about a growing crisis in our classrooms – a crisis of disrupted learning. It is a crisis driven by student trauma and the insufficient development of social and emotional skills among children that negatively affects not only classrooms in Connecticut but classrooms across our country.

At least one state has already begun to address this crisis, but here in Connecticut, those who call themselves advocates for our students have decided to pretend there is no problem, or at least pretend there is nothing we can “afford” right now. Our solutions were not accepted, but others have offered no real alternatives. As a result, classrooms continue to be cleared, instruction time is lost, and teachers are absent from their classrooms, at home recovering from injuries.

What is driving this crisis? Students with intense unmet needs that negatively impact their ability to function in school – adverse childhood experiences and traumatic events outside of school. Without adequate resources to support our students, the challenges those children are dealing with result in frequent, sometimes severe disruptions that take time away from learning and affect not only those students, but the other students in that class and just as importantly, their teachers.

Doing nothing is unacceptable; pretending there is no crisis is foolish and irresponsible. It is past time to address the violence in our classrooms, the loss of learning, and the trauma affecting our students and our teachers. While professional development in social-emotional learning is part of the solution, it is only one piece.

The bill before us is a first step toward a much more comprehensive solution – a solution that will more fully meet the urgent need to help our kids. I must underscore that it is only a first step, and much more needs to be done. CEA pledges to work with those who wish to be real problem solvers and true advocates for those who truly need our help – not later, but now.