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Testimony of
Ray Rossomando
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Housing Committee

Re:
HB 5681 AAC Municipal Opportunity Reimbursement and Educational Equity
HB 6436 AA Establishing the Open Choice Vouchers Pilot Program

February 18, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Lopes, Representative McGee, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta, and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando and I serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts in Connecticut.

CEA strongly supports HB 5681 and HB 6436.

CEA believes HB 5681 and HB 6436 offer innovative incentives toward promoting diverse affordable housing options.

Equitable housing opportunities and educational opportunity go hand-in-hand, yet finding the two operating in concert in Connecticut's communities is rare. We believe that such innovative approaches can make great progress toward building stronger, more diverse communities that ensure more equitable opportunities.

Additionally, as a former commissioner of the West Hartford Housing Authority, I have come to understand the challenges of promoting affordable housing options in municipalities. Resistance to inclusionary zoning and opposition to affordable housing expansion perpetuate vestiges of red lining and historical biases that stand at the root of inequitable opportunities for children. Misperceptions regarding the potential tax burden and school levies associated with affordable housing expansion persist despite studies showing that such expansion does not result in such burden. Overcoming such challenges has proven elusive; legislative leadership, such as that shown in these two proposals, is necessary to foster lasting change.

We commend Representative Rojas for proposing House bill 5681 and the Housing Committee for raising HB 6436. Each are innovative approaches to encourage communities to overcome these challenges and misperceptions