



Testimony of

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Before the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee
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SB 1106: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT EQUITABLE INVESTMENT FUND AND DEDICATING CERTAIN REVENUES TO SAID FUND

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, Senator Martin, Representative Cheeseman, and members of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee. My name is Jeff Leake. I have been a teacher in Cheshire for four decades, and I currently serve as president of the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents educators in over 150 school districts across the state.

I am here on behalf of our CEA members and as a member of the Recovery for All coalition speaking in support of SB 1106. We commend Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlon, and the members of this committee for bringing this critically important bill forward.

SB 1106 represents a great step forward to progressively raising about \$1.14 billion a year, revenue we know is necessary to address the huge disparities that exist across our state. Connecticut is a state of socioeconomic extremes, where averages mask the extreme wealth in towns like Westport compared to the extreme poverty just a few exits away in Bridgeport.

As the United Way points out, 38% of households in our state have income that falls short of what is needed to pay for basic necessities such as housing, food, childcare, health care, technology, and transportation. The Connecticut Food Bank, citing the Feeding America project, notes that food insecurity is increasing by 28% in the state due to the pandemic.

This bill provides pathways to rebuilding our communities and reducing the crushing effects of income inequality that exist in our state. It produces revenue that will help so many Connecticut families—among them, the families of students we teach. And when we lift up communities and families, we lift up our students.

We lift up our students when we know that they come to us from and return at the end of the day to a home where they feel safe; we lift up our students when families can afford adequate and healthy food choices. We lift up our students when they have access to quality health care. All of these ‘lifts’ will help

improve academic performance, increase graduation rates, and decrease food insecurity. These 'lifts' will likely reduce developmental delays and behavior problems in our schools and result in fewer days of missed school.

The revenue that this bill would provide, and the investments in our families and communities that this bill calls for, will result in greater financial stability for those families and communities while enhancing the opportunities for our students all across Connecticut.

SB 1106 has enormous potential to reduce the struggles to survive that so many families face (and that their children come to school with), the anxiety that comes with those struggles, and the obvious impact on students' well-being and their ability to learn.

We urge all legislators to support this critical bill.