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Testimony of
Kate Dias
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
Re:
Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Education
February 7, 2023

Good morning, Senator Duff, Representative Concepcion, and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am Kate Dias, president of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) representing educators in over 150 school districts in Connecticut.

CEA strongly supports the confirmation of Charlene Russell-Tucker as commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Education.

As commissioner, Ms. Russell-Tucker has excelled at bringing people together from various points of view to better inform decisions that affect public education in Connecticut. In doing so, Ms. Russell-Tucker has been instrumental in ensuring coordination across state agencies and in guaranteeing that parents, educators, and other stakeholders around the state are heard by state agency policymakers.

I most appreciate her unapologetic commitment to mental health and wellness for all students and staff. The work we have done has not been easy, seamless, or lacking controversy. However, Ms. Russell-Tucker has always kept the lines of communication open and been willing to consider many points of view. The challenges we face and changes that are on the horizon require creativity, collaboration, and a fiery commitment to public education. Ms. Russell-Tucker embraces all these values.

As a long-time leader within the State Department of Education, Ms. Russell-Tucker has helped guide state education policy toward being more responsive to children of color, more meaningful to students who aspire to be more than a test score, and more trauma-informed for students who can excel with the appropriate support of caring adults. Such values have waned in public education over the past two decades to the detriment of student learning and development. They have become irrefutably more necessary as the effects of the pandemic on students, parents, and educators persist. Ms. Russell-Tucker has been an influential voice of reason during her tenure as commissioner. We once again welcome Ms. Russell-Tucker's confirmation as commissioner of education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.