

Testimony of
Tom Nicholas

Before the
Education Committee

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

March 9, 2020

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Tom Nicholas, and I am the vice president of the Connecticut Education Association, the state's largest teachers' union.

While I recognize that HB 5378 is an acknowledgement that districts need to integrate social emotional learning into their curriculum, that is all it is—an acknowledgement. There are no teeth, no mandate, no funding, no proven path forward on how to successfully implement strategies addressing the needs of dysregulated students in our schools in this bill. The old adage “You get what you pay for” comes to mind.

All children deserve the very best education possible. Currently the state has an SEL Collaborative digging into this matter to yield recommendations on how to best move forward to serve the children of this state in forming a safe and equitable compassionate learning environment. Why not include those recommendations?

We have Dr. Marc Brackett, professor and founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, who in his latest book, *Permission to Feel*, outlines an evidence-based approach to social emotion learning that supports entire school communities in developing the skills of emotional intelligence and a positive school climate.

I encourage you all to not merely scratch the surface but take a deeper dive—like the SEL Collaborative and the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence—and invest in our schools, our children, and our futures.

Thank you.