

Testimony of  
**Jeff Leake, President**  
**Connecticut Education Association**  
Before the  
**Appropriations Committee**  
Re:  
**SB 705 ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH  
PREPAREDNESS**

March 26, 2021

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jeff Leake and I serve as the President for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents tens of thousands of educators across Connecticut.

CEA supports the comprehensive approach to pandemic preparedness proposed in SB 705.

With respect to aspects of the bill involving our schools, we ask that committee members take into consideration challenges associated with food insecurity and inequities that could arise around the sharing of educators across school districts.

**Food Insecurity**

It was a marvel to see how school staff scrambled to expand the reach of the school lunchroom into homes a year ago. Yet despite their hard work to fight hunger, teachers observed persistent obstacles for students and their families. One obstacle included food pick-up schedules that conflicted with different shifts of essential workers. Another significant obstacle our members observed was a reluctance of students and their families to be seen picking food up and the associated stigma. We suggest that should this bill become law, that the agencies addressing food security consider these and other obstacles that hinder efforts to fight hunger.

**Shared Teaching Staff**

A year ago, it was also a marvel to see educators going from zero-to-sixty to learn remote teaching strategies that could be most effective, given that there is no replacement for in-person learning. Teachers – and students – felt the impact of staffing challenges as remote

instruction distorted into ineffective strategies, such as “dual teaching” (the delivery of instruction simultaneously to remote and in-person students by a single teacher). In such settings, no students, either remote or in-person, benefit.

SB 705 also proposes the development of a plan for sharing certified teaching staff across districts. Given the experience all educators have had over the past year, we believe that such a plan should only be developed with significant input of educators, and with consensus from organizations representing educators, such as CEA, AFT-CT, CABE, CAPSS and CAS.

Thank you.