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**Testimony of Jeff Leake
President,
Connecticut Education Association**

Before the Labor Committee and Public Employees Committee

**Re:
SB 908 AAC The Right of a Public Employee to Join or Support a Union**

March 4, 2021

Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor Committee. My name is Jeff Leake, and I serve as president of the Connecticut Education Association. CEA is an organization representing active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts across Connecticut, and its legislative priorities are informed by active and retired teachers who serve on the many member-driven committees and commissions of our organization.

We testify today in support of Senate Bill 908 and thank committee members for raising this very important issue this year, as you did over the past couple of sessions.

Over the last few decades, the labor–management relationship has become increasingly unbalanced. It’s no wonder that across the country, wages of working families have not kept pace with inflation, and employees’ shares of health insurance have increased. Meanwhile, job and income security have declined, leaving more working families living paycheck to paycheck, one economic or health care setback away from bankruptcy.

The bill we are supporting today would help restore the balance between workers and management that better ensures a fair economy. This balance has long been the rationale for ensuring workers, through their unions, can freely advocate for better working conditions.

The unions here today have come together to help restore this balance for their workers, for our teachers, for the betterment of their employers, and for a fairer economy. The bill we support is important because it ensures that the relationship between unions and their members is collaborative, communicative, and inclusive. It pushes back against policies that serve to undermine this relationship and ultimately harm the workplace. And it fights back against individuals with unimaginable wealth who actively spend it to expand their wealth at the expense of the remaining 99% of workers just trying to get by.

Over the past year, union members—teachers included—have been targeted by misinformation from national organizations designed to undermine them. They have received messages from their employers that violate labor law by seeking to unfairly meddle in union business. They have been strong-armed by employers to reject their union in contradiction to their own interests. In short, workers’ rights have been outwardly violated.

The bill we support today helps to ensure that educators are treated fairly and provided accurate and helpful information about their employment, their career, and their profession. It helps to protect and hopefully restore the balance between workers and employers that helped build a middle class and foster prosperity across the nation. It helps to end the lowering of the bar—the race to the bottom—of working conditions and wages for Connecticut workers.

We thank you for raising this bill, and we urge your support.