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Testimony of

Ray Rossomando

Connecticut Education Association

Before the

Commerce Committee

Re:

HB 5266 STUDENT WORK RELEASE POLICIES

March 1, 2022

Good morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Currey, and members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, and I serve as the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents tens of thousands of Connecticut educators.

CEA supports the intent of HB 5266 and urges committee members to ensure that student work release programs are planned and coordinated with certified educators, particularly if leading to high school credit or otherwise connected to a student's high school experience. We also caution committee members to ensure that student work release programs do not inadvertently become a pathway for students to circumvent high school completion.

CEA supports efforts to better connect curriculum to the world of work. For over twenty years now, public schools have been steered in a direction that has focused on the limited scope of test scores in certain tested subjects. This focus on testing has created a preference for a limited population of students who are competent in reading and math, and who also test well. It has established a preference for traditional college pathways at a time when options for practical and affordable post-secondary learning have greatly expanded. This preference has been leaving behind thousands of students who show interests and competencies in the many other skills that contribute to an individual's success and the state's innovativeness and competitiveness in the global economy.

For these reasons, efforts to tap into students' interests, skills, and creativity should be enhanced. Work release programs are among the tools to help schools do this. We support the intent of HB 5266 and the inclusion of certified educators in the design of work release programs.

Thank you.