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Testimony of
Kate Field
Connecticut Education Association
Before the Education Committee

Raised Bill No. 5323

March 21, 2022

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Kate Field, and I am the Teacher Development Specialist at Connecticut Education Association, an organization that advocates for teachers and public education. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of raised bill 5323, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO CONSOLIDATE OR ELIMINATE CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATORS.

In 2016, I had the privilege of serving, along with representatives from other education stakeholder groups, on the Educator Professional Development Requirements Task Force, which was created by Special Act 16-9 to review professional development and in-service training requirements for educators described in Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) 10-148a, 10-148b, and 10-220a. These requirements had become unwieldy and, in some cases, divorced from the definition of high-quality professional learning as defined in C.G.S. 10-148a. The task force was charged with recommending ways to reduce requirements in order to make them more manageable for districts, meaningful for educators, and more likely to translate to improved educational experiences for children. Many, although not all, of these recommendations, were subsequently adopted, creating more flexibility for districts to create professional development plans tailored to meet the unique needs of their educators and students. To help districts capitalize on this new flexibility, CEA created a Professional Learning Academy, which offers dozens of workshops free of charge to districts on topics like implicit bias, Mental Health First Aid, and social-emotional learning. PDECs can select the workshops, or collaborate with CEA to create customized offerings, in order to meet the specific needs of their teachers and students.

Unfortunately, the new flexibility created by the 2016 task force was slowly eroded in subsequent years, as new professional development requirements were added back into statute, making it increasingly difficult for districts to meet all the requirements in a meaningful way and leaving little time for individualized professional learning opportunities like those offered by CEA. Worse, the requirements are not relevant to all educators, are so numerous they can only be covered superficially, are expensive, and, worst of all, are unlikely to enhance learning or improve educator or student wellbeing. To truly improve practice or enhance wellbeing, the professional development requirements must be reduced, and greater flexibility offered to district

PDECs, allowing them craft a learning plan carefully tailored to their district's unique needs and circumstances. Creating a work group, similar to the 2016 task force, will engage stakeholders in a collaborative process to reduce the cumbersome requirements and find ways to make professional learning relevant, effective, and meaningful.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Raised Bill 5323 and the creation of a work group to reduce the number of professional development and in-service requirements for educators.