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Testimony of

Ray Rossomando

Connecticut Education Association

Before a joint meeting of the

Education Committee

Re:

**SB 231 AAC THE STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER
HB5282 AAC THE INCLUSION OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC
SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND PROHIBITING THE DISAGGREGATION OF STUDENT DATA BY ETHNIC
SUBGROUPS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM
HB 5285 AAC THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

March 4, 2022

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of Education Committee, my name is Ray Rossomando, and I serve as Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents educators in over 150 school districts across the state.

Today my testimony will focus on various bills addressing SERC and public school curricula.

SB 231 AAC THE STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

CEA supports the intent of SB 231 and supports legislation that would help SERC overcome obstacles to relocating its facilities. However, as written, the proposed deletion to 10-357b, subsection (c) would remove the protections that were in put in place in response to the no-bid contracts from 2012, particularly those relating to personal services agreements.

Ultimately, for CEA the issue is about public transparency and accountability over who makes education policy decisions affecting educators.

Fortunately, we believe that the bill could be revised to retain protections on matters relating to personal service agreements and professional services, while permitting SERC the flexibility it needs to address its relocation.

Below we share two potential options that we believe would retain references within Titles 4 and 4a to consultants and personal services agreements in Ch. 55a (within Title 4) and the prequalification and evaluation of contractors in Ch. 58a (within Title 4a).

Option 1

(c) The State Education Resource Center shall be subject to (1) rules, regulations, and restrictions on [purchasing, procurement,] consultants and personal service agreements [and the disposition of assets generally applicable to Connecticut state agencies,] including those contained in [titles 4, 4a, and 4b, and section 4e-19,] Chapter 55a of Title 4 and Chapter 58a of Title 4a, and (2) audit by the Auditors of Public Accounts under section 2-90.

Option 2

Sec. 10-357c. Written procedures. The members of the Board of Directors of the State Education Resource Center, established pursuant to section 10-357a, shall adopt written procedures, in accordance with the provisions of section 1-121, for: (1) Adopting an annual budget and plan of operations, including a requirement of board approval before the budget or plan may take effect; (2) hiring, dismissing, promoting and compensating employees of the center, including an affirmative action policy and a requirement of board approval before a position may be created or a vacancy filled; (3) acquiring real and personal property and personal services, including a requirement of board approval for any nonbudgeted expenditure in excess of an amount to be determined by the board; and (4) contracting for financial, legal, consulting and other professional services, consistent with Chapter 55a, 58a including a requirement that the center solicit proposals at least once every three years for each such service which it uses.

HB5282 AAC THE INCLUSION OF ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND PROHIBITING THE DISAGGREGATION OF STUDENT DATA BY ETHNIC SUBGROUPS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM

HB 5282 requires Boards of Education to include Asian American and Pacific Islander studies in curricula. CEA recognizes that the addition of Asian American and Pacific Islander studies into the state's required curricula acknowledges the contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander to our history and culture. We also recognize that education is critical to overcoming biases, bigotry, and hate that persist in American society.

According to the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers, our teachers are tasked with the responsibility to "nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation." We encourage everyone to support this code through education, inclusion, open-mindedness, and respectfulness to others.

American culture continues to suffer from vestiges of historic biases and blatant bigotry. Public education is a key ingredient to overcoming such forces and making our country stronger. CEA advocates for curricula that reinforce the ability of our schools to prepare students to engage with others and thrive as respectful, informed, and productive citizens in a diverse, interconnected world.

To that end, CEA believes that the continued development of a state model curriculum by educators, with input from parents and boards of education, would help ensure that the history and cultures of all of Connecticut's citizens, including Asian American and Pacific Islanders noted in this bill, are represented appropriately. Such model curriculum, as provided for in CGS 10-25b would be a cost-effective way to promote more inclusive and responsive curricula in every district in the state.

HB 5285 AAC THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

CEA supports HB 5285 with changes.

Sections 1-3 make climate change a required, rather than a permissive program of study in public schools. Although the Next Generation Science Standards also include climate change, adoption of climate change into local curricula is inconsistent. We believe the proposed change will help correct this inconsistency.

Section 4 establishes a personal financial management pilot program within CREC. We support this pilot and the potential to learn from its implementation the benefit it provides to school children.

Section 5 establishes a Task Force on Civics Instruction in public schools. We support this proposal. For various reasons, public schools have diminished their focus on civics, citizenship, and American government. Educators have known this for some time, recognizing the negative impact policies like No Child Left Behind and high-stakes testing had on curricula – civics was left behind.

However, although the bill includes on the task force teachers or administrators, it does not guarantee that teachers are represented. We ask that the bill be revised to include teachers as part of the task force and further ask that organizations such as CEA and AFT-CT that represent teachers be identified as a resource to select teachers for this important work.