

*Testimony of*

***Joslyn DeLancey***  
***Connecticut Education Association***

*Before a joint meeting of the*

***Education Committee***

*Re:*

**SB 273 An Act Concerning Teacher Certification**  
**HB 5322 An Act Concerning the Creation of a Human Services Permit and a Requirement That School Social Workers Conduct Home Visits During the School Year**  
**HB 5321 An Act Implementing Certain Recommendations of the Paraeducator Advisory Council**

***March 21, 2022***

Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, and members of this esteemed committee, my name is Joslyn DeLancey, and I serve as the Vice President for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents educators in over 150 school districts across Connecticut. I am also a Darien Public Schools teacher. I have taught grades 3-5 for the past 17 years and took a leave of absence this past August 2021 to serve in my current role. While my experience has been of a general education classroom teacher, I also hold an 092 certification in school leadership as well as a master's degree in special education.

I am testifying today on **SB 273 An Act Concerning Teacher Certification, HB 5322 AAC the Creation of a Human Services Permit and a Requirement That School Social Workers Conduct Home Visits During the School Year, and HB 5321 An Act Implementing Certain Recommendations of the Paraeducator Advisory Council**

CEA generally supports SB 273 and the idea of reviewing our certification system to ensure that we have a diverse and strong population of educators who represent the students and classrooms we have across the state. Taking the critical time to identify obsolete provisions, evaluate the existing requirements for effectiveness, and analyze whether statutes or regulations create a barrier to entry or undue hardship for the recruitment or retention of teaching candidates, including reciprocity, is an important step. However, as you go forward with this work, CEA cautions the committee against diminishing standards and value of certification as a means of simplifying the process or attracting more teachers. We need to ensure that our standards remain high while also removing unnecessary, complicated, and sometimes biased barriers to certification.

We are also asking you to consider the attached amendment, which would enhance the years of experience an educator would need to hold a school leadership certification and ultimately become a building principal. Currently, an educator can become the leader of a school community after just 5 short years of experience in a building. This means that a person can graduate from college, become a teacher, and then a building leader, all before their 10-year high school reunion. As a local, and more recently, a statewide union leader, I have observed the negative impact that inexperienced administrators can have on job satisfaction, performance, and the overall climate and culture of a school.

The role of school administrators cannot be understated. They nurture the morale of a building, they are responsible for important curricular initiatives; hire teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, and other school staff; establish and carry their building budgets, design class lists and assign grade levels to teachers; communicate and care for parents and families; run IEP meetings; and many other important daily and yearly tasks. Doing this work well is not easy. It takes a skilled, strong, empathic, reflective, and experienced school leader. Building this knowledge and experience takes time.

Under current law, a teacher can receive their 092 certification, become an administrator, and even a building principal with only 5 years of experience. We are asking you to consider moving the requirements for 092 administrator's certification to 6 years of school experience and increasing the number of years of experience needed to become a school principal to 10 (we suggest a phase-in to limit the impact on current 092 candidates). Opposition may come from an interest among preparation program operators to fill post-graduate seats and aspirations among individuals to increase their salary and autonomy by rushing to administration. Neither perspective offers a valid understanding of the time it takes to truly become a skilled and wise school leader.

### **HB 5322 AAC the Creation of a Human Services Permit and a Requirement That School Social Workers Conduct Home Visits During the School Year**

CEA does not support HB 5322 as written.

CEA understands the importance of creating flexibility to address shortages and to attract more qualified professionals into our public schools. The Human Services Permit proposed in HB 5322 appears to address this goal. As we noted in testimony above regarding SB 273 AAC Teacher Certification, it is critical that we balance recruitment of employees into schools with maintaining the professional and pedagogical standards that come with certification, as well as the applicability of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers.

CEA believes that requiring the proposed Human Service Permit to be short-term and issued by the State Department of Education is an important first step toward ensuring this balance. However, we also believe the bill should more clearly require permits to be accompanied with a requirement that an individual be engaged in coursework toward a

teaching certificate, as done for durational shortage area permits. This would also more clearly unify individuals under such permits with their certified colleagues. CEA strongly urges committee members to ensure that such individuals are afforded the opportunity to be part of the bargaining unit of their certified peers, avoiding the perception that there are different classes of educators.

Section 2 of HB 5322 requires school social workers to make two home visits to each child in their caseload. CEA supports [parent-teacher home visit programs](#) (PTHV) when done in an appropriate manner. However, we are concerned about the requirement detailed in the bill for a couple of reasons:

The reality is that schools are already significantly understaffed by social workers and other support staff. Requiring two home visits of entire caseloads of students be done by an already understaffed cadre of school social workers will exacerbate the impact of the shortage. Additionally, there is no guarantee that a home visitation program operated by a school district under this bill will meet the quality criteria of well-designed programs, such as the PTHV promoted by the [State Department of Education](#) and [CEA](#). PTHV programs successfully implemented across the country include training, pairing of professionals for visits, and guarantees of time and appropriate stipends for the extra time visiting homes may take.

CEA urges committee members to consider our concerns in any final version of this bill.

I'd also like to say a few words regarding **HB 5321 An Act Implementing Certain Recommendations of the Paraeducator Advisory Council**.

As a general education classroom teacher, I am forever grateful for the work of our paraeducators. Paraeducators play an important role in our classroom days and serve as an additional educator in the classroom. Because of the importance of their role, it is critical for paraeducators to be provided dynamic and strong professional development opportunities, higher salaries, better benefits, as well as equal care and treatment as teachers. CEA Supports proposals consistent with the Para-advisory council's recommendations, such as those extending professional development and IEP participation to paraeducators.

However, the bill also extends a provision applicable to certain teachers to para-educators that would require para-educators to take a foundations of reading exam every two years. We oppose this provision for paras, and we oppose this requirement as it exists in current law for teachers. While we understand the need to ensure that we have strong reading instruction for our students, we do not believe this biannual exam requirement contributes anything to this goal.

We believe that this survey is a barrier to certification for aspiring educators, particularly for people of color, and that it is also culturally biased. Additionally, the requirement for teachers to take this two-hour exam every two years is a poor use of time that does little to ensure that educators currently in classrooms get productive professional development or meaningful reflection as a result of the survey. We urge you to remove the survey from HB 5321 and to

reconsider the survey's current implementation for educators. We believe that strong reading instruction comes from well-designed and implemented professional development, removal of boxed literacy programs (e.g., Lucy Calkins's Units of Study for Teaching Reading series), and mindful and thorough evaluation and feedback from strong, smart, and sophisticated building administrators.

CEA and I so appreciate the work that this committee continues to do to reflect on the impacts of the pandemic, the state of our schools, and the need to recruit and retain teachers. We look forward to seeing the legislation that moves forward to build successful school communities and to enhance the teaching profession. We also hope that you consider and utilize our feedback in the establishment of your legislation.

Thank you.

**CEA**  
**Administrator Experience Amendment**

- **Increase the years of teaching experience required for obtaining an administrator's certificate from 5 to 6 years.**
- **Requires any person serving as a building principal to have at least 10 years of experience.**

Amend SB 273 AAC Teacher Certification by adding a new section at the end as follows:  
Sec. 501 (NEW)

(a) Notwithstanding any regulation pursuant to section 10-145d of the general statutes regarding the number of months of successful teaching experience required for the provision of an administrator certificate, effective for certificates awarded on or after July 1, 2024, the State Department of Education shall not award an administrator certificate to any applicant who has not completed 60 months of successful teaching experience or service.

(b) No local or regional board of education shall employ as a school building principal any individual who has not obtained administrator certification and completed 100 months of successful teaching experience, provided any individual employed as a building principal prior to July 1, 2022, shall be permitted to remain in such position unless otherwise separated from service.