*Testimony of*

**Kate Field**

**Connecticut Education Association**

*Before the*

**Education Committee**

Re:

**HB 5437 AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATE RELIEF**

March 13, 2024

Co-Chair Senator McCrory, Co-Chair Representative Currey, Ranking Member Senator Berthel, Ranking Member Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Kate Field, and I am the Teacher Development Specialist at the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and member of the Educational Mandate Relief Working Group created by Public Act 23-160.

CEA strongly supports the creation of an advisory council for the purpose of reviewing future mandates pertaining to professional development and in-service training, provided a representative of CEA is added to the list of members designated in HB 5437. CEA is currently a member of the Educational Mandate Relief Working Group and has proven to be an important partner in collaboratively finding ways to reduce and streamline professional development and in-service requirements. Ensuring CEA’s perspective is included on the proposed advisory council is essential to creating a full understanding of how future mandates will impact students and teachers across the state.

CEA also supports the creation of a professional development and in-service requirements database, which would enable school districts to keep track of who has completed specific trainings and who has not. Teachers who change districts will be able to demonstrate they recently completed a state required training in their previous district, thus freeing up both time and resources. The database could also house recorded Connecticut specific in-service trainings on topics like blood borne pathogens and food allergies, allowing districts to focus more time and resources on topics that meaningfully enhance teaching and learning.

CEA supports the measures identified in HB 5437 that would reduce duplicative mandates and provide greater flexibility for district professional development and evaluation committees (PDECs) in determining when state requirements should be offered and to whom. This increased flexibility empowers the PDEC and is an important step in alleviating the burden of so many mandates on districts, although this step alone does not go far enough.

To summarize, CEA supports HB 5437, provided the membership of the proposed educational mandates advisory council includes a representative from the Connecticut Education Association. The Education Mandate Relief Working Group will continue to do its work and recommend additional ways to streamline professional development and in-service requirements, alleviating burdens on teachers, administrators, and boards of education.

In addition, CEA urges the members of this committee to consider additional ways of reducing the overwhelming number of professional development and in-service trainings in state statute, saving districts millions of dollars, and enabling educators to focus on the professional learning needed to enhance student engagement, learning, and social emotional growth.

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration of my testimony.