*Testimony of*

**Ray Rossomando**

**Connecticut Education Association**

*Before the*

**Human Services Committee**

*Re:*

SB 317 AN ACT EXPANDING THE COVERED CONNECTICUT PROGRAM

March 7, 2024

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Representative Case, Senator Seminara, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Ray Rossomando, and I am the policy, research, and government relations director at the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents more than 45,000 active and retired teachers from over 160 school districts across the state.

I am here today to offer testimony in support of the Husky healthcare program and the Covered CT Program, specifically SB 317. CEA is deeply invested in ensuring that all individuals, especially those in the education sector, have access to adequate healthcare coverage for themselves and their families.

Given the income range proposed in the bill, the extension of these programs could reach many of our early career educators. This is particularly true of teachers on the beginning steps of their district’s salary schedules.

As we consider the implications for educators, it’s crucial to recognize the challenges faced by teachers who may be just starting out in their careers. Without additional family income, navigating healthcare expenses can be particularly daunting. Husky presents a viable option for pregnant teachers and those with children, offering essential coverage that aligns with their financial circumstances.

Furthermore, the Covered CT Program, as outlined in SB 317, serves as a complementary initiative aimed at extending healthcare coverage to individuals who do not qualify for Husky. The adjustment to the eligibility thresholds acknowledges the financial realities faced by educators and seeks to provide them with the support they need to prioritize their health and well-being.

While SB 317 focuses primarily on single individuals, it’s essential to consider the broader implications for families within our communities. Extending eligibility to families would align the Covered CT Program more closely with the provisions offered by Husky, potentially offering comprehensive coverage options for educators and their loved ones.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the vital role that healthcare coverage plays in supporting our educators and their families. By ensuring access to programs like Husky and expanding eligibility under the Covered CT Program, we can help teachers focus on their essential work in our schools, knowing that their healthcare needs can be met. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.