

2026 CEA Governor/Lt. Governor Candidate Questionnaire

NAME: Ned Lamont

PARTY: Democratic

DISTRICT: Statewide

PAST AND/OR CURRENT ELECTED OFFICES HELD: Governor of Connecticut

A. TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

1. Teacher Salary Enhancement

Background: Connecticut is facing a teacher shortage crisis as fewer young adults enter the teacher preparation programs and worsening teaching conditions push current teachers to leave for other fields or retirement. Salaries continue to be one of the concerns most highlighted by both new and experienced teachers. There are school districts in our state paying first-year teachers less than \$43,000/year, and more than half of the beginning salaries fall below the income threshold to qualify for certain state assistance (HUSKY B). Similarly, we have experienced educators with master's degrees regularly working second and third jobs. Increasing teacher salaries is a vital key in addressing the problems around teacher recruitment and retention, one which is supported by the public. In fact, a CEA survey of Connecticut voters found that:

- 83% of voters say we must increase teacher salaries in order to address the teacher shortage.
- 90% of voters believe teachers should be paid more than or comparable to professions with similar education and training requirements.
- 65% of voters say teachers in Connecticut are not paid enough.

CEA Position: CEA supports the establishment of a minimum starting salary of \$60,000 and increasing veteran teachers' salaries paid for through grants to municipalities from a new teaching enhancement fund.

☐ Agree with CEA's Position ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☐ I'll publicly support legislation establishing a minimum starting salary for teachers.

I strongly support raising teacher base salaries. If we are going to truly address inequities in our educational system, we need to make sure teaching is not charity work. Teachers should not have to take on second jobs or rely on state assistance. One of my goals for the Blue Ribbon Commission is to make sure more money goes into the classroom - that means, in part, raising teacher salaries. I look forward to working with CEA on the best way to accomplish that goal.

2. Teacher Recruitment & Diversity

Background: The number of people entering the teaching profession is declining at a time when the numbers leaving are increasing. Connecticut needs to pursue innovative ways to attract and retain teachers. At the same time, schools need to continually ensure that their faculties resemble the diversity of our society. Additionally, students of color show stronger educational outcomes when their teachers share their ethnic or racial background. Policies and programs that address barriers to entering paths toward certification (like biased testing and high tuition costs) have shown success in increasing the number and diversity of candidates. So too, have programs that provide aspiring teachers career counseling, mentoring support, and strong clinical experiences. Furthermore, targeted financial assistance that can help offset costs of tuition would be instrumental in ensuring that the teaching profession is accessible for all. Finally, a statewide program to recruit teachers must also recognize that promoting the conditions in schools that can increase retention and address legacies of institutional bias is critical to a long-standing solution.

CEA Position: CEA supports establishment of teacher recruitment programs that promote diversity by addressing obstacles to entry into education preparation programs, include resources to offset the costs of training and provide mentorship and guidance to help each candidate earn their certification. Some proposals to recruit a greater number of diverse teachers seek to lower expectations and standards for certification – policies that ultimately result in less experienced and prepared people teaching in the least wealthy communities. CEA believes that innovative policies and incentives can improve recruitment, workplace culture, and retention while maintaining high professional standards.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation calling for innovative ways to increase the numbers and diversity of teachers graduating from rigorous teacher preparation programs and pursuing a successful career in teaching.**

I agree with CEA: every student deserves a well-prepared, well-supported teacher, and we should never accept a lower standard for students in any community.

We have to make it easier for talented people to choose teaching—not by lowering the bar, but by removing the barriers that keep people out of the profession. That means more teacher apprenticeships, better developed teacher pipeline programs, help with the cost of preparation and certification, and real mentoring for new educators. Over the past several years, with CEA's leadership, we have worked on our certification requirements, allowed for reciprocity with other states, and grown our alternative route to certification - all of which help bring more individuals into the profession.

Connecticut has some of the best teachers in the country. Our job is to build a stronger, more diverse pipeline into the profession and make sure educators have the support and respect they need to stay in the classroom.

3. Paid Student Teaching

Background: Student teaching is one of the most demanding and transformative components of an aspiring educator's preparation program. For an entire semester, student teachers work full time in classrooms, planning lessons, teaching, assessing students, collaborating with mentor teachers, building relationships with families, and fully participating in the daily life of a school. Despite working full time hours, most student teachers receive no compensation and, in most cases, are paying tuition while completing this clinical experience.

While 10 states have enacted legislation to ensure their student teachers receive compensation, Connecticut has not. This lack of compensation creates a significant financial barrier to entering the profession. Many aspiring educators are forced to take on additional jobs or loans, delay completion of their preparation programs, or reconsider entering teaching altogether because they cannot afford to work full time without pay. These barriers disproportionately impact candidates from low income backgrounds and undermine efforts to diversify and strengthen Connecticut's educator workforce. A 2025 survey of recent student teachers found that:

- 88% report being considerably or extremely concerned about their personal finances while student teaching.
- 80% feel exploited not getting paid for work during student teaching.
- 98% of CT aspiring educators agree or strongly agree that being paid for student teaching would ease their financial worries, and 95% said that it would make student teachers feel more valued.
- Aspiring educators of color were generally older, more reliant on financial support from others, and 1.5x more likely than their white peers to report having considered dropping out of their EPP because of financial pressure.

At the same time, Connecticut continues to face educator shortages, particularly in high need subject areas. Connecticut's educator preparation programs (EPP) enrollment declined 15% between 2020 and 2024. Providing compensation for all student teachers is a critical step toward removing barriers, strengthening the educator pipeline, and ensuring that future teachers can focus on developing their practice rather than managing financial hardship.

CEA Position: CEA supports policies and funding that ensure stipends for student teaching for every aspiring educator enrolled in an educator preparation program.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☐ I will publicly support legislation that provides stipends for all student teachers and strengthens Connecticut's educator pipeline.

Connecticut needs to make teaching a more accessible and affordable career path. That is why my administration invested \$2 million in a teacher apprenticeship program that will support 75 aspiring teachers each year with stipends, mentoring, and tuition assistance while they gain classroom experience. In addition, we eliminated the fee on Initial Educator Certifications - because you should not have to pay to be a teacher.

Providing stipends for student teaching is another strategy along those same lines. I want to bring down the cost for those learning to be a teacher.

B. FAIRNESS & SAFETY FOR EDUCATORS

4. Classroom Safety & Challenging Student Behavior

Background: Connecticut, like many states across the country, is facing a crisis in education driven by a growing number of young students who have experienced traumatic adverse childhood experiences. Our members see this every day in their classrooms, most acutely in the earliest grades. It appears in students' difficulty regulating stress and emotions, and in aggressive, disruptive, and sometimes violent outbursts that cause real physical and emotional harm to others in the school community. These outbursts are cries for help.

Yet teachers often lack the support and resources needed to meet the needs of students who, through no fault of their own, are experiencing trauma. Resources to respond to incidents are limited, and investment in prevention remains minimal. As a result, teachers are frequently left without support when a child cries out. Classrooms are cleared, learning is disrupted for all students, and the child in crisis returns without meaningful intervention, their underlying needs still unmet.

The legislature has begun to take steps to address these challenges through grants for certified support staff and policies promoting safer school climates. Still, it is imperative that we continue to support both students and educators by enacting and funding practices that meaningfully address childhood trauma.

CEA Position: CEA supports continued efforts and the necessary funding to address behavior that negatively impacts school climate, risks interfering with teaching and learning, or threatens the safety of students and staff in the school community.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation that seeks to address student trauma and continuing to improve school climate, including policies, practices, and funding.**

I am a strong advocate for state funding dedicated to proactive violence intervention and prevention strategies. Real school safety requires addressing root causes of conflict before they escalate. By directing resources toward evidence-based community programs and school-based diversionary initiatives, we can reach at-risk youth early, address cycles of trauma, and maintain classrooms as sanctuary spaces for education.

When students struggle, it is often a cry for help. That is why we must expand state funding for social workers, counselors, and psychologists to provide the personalized attention students need. Every child should feel seen and supported—not for their outbursts, but for who they are. Whether a student is facing domestic instability or food insecurity, I want a dedicated team ready to engage and help that family find a better path forward.

5. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Protections

Background: In recent years, educators have experienced an increase in harassment, bullying, and threats of violence, including doxxing, false accusations, and intimidation originating within and outside of school communities. Surveys conducted by CEA and others indicate that many teachers fear for their personal safety or the safety of their families due to unwarranted harassment from members of the public. Among all occupations, teachers experience the highest rate of workplace violence in restricted access settings, exceeding rates experienced by mental health workers, law enforcement, and security personnel. While several public employees with lower rates of workplace violence are afforded protections under the Freedom of Information Act, teachers are not explicitly included. The public disclosure of personal contact information such as home addresses and personal phone numbers, combined with increased workplace and political violence and heightened politicization of school curricula, leave educators vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and threats beyond the workplace. Protecting educators' personal information is essential to maintaining a safe learning environment and retaining qualified professionals in the classroom.

CEA Position: CEA supports proposals to strengthen FOIA protections by explicitly exempting public school teachers' and other public employees' personal contact information, including residential addresses and personal telephone numbers, from public disclosure. We believe these protections are necessary to ensure educator safety, promote fairness, and prevent harassment, while preserving appropriate transparency in government.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation to explicitly protect public school teachers' personal contact information, including home addresses and personal phone numbers, from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.**

Teachers and school staff should not have to worry that their home addresses will be easily available to people who may seek to harass or intimidate them. This past legislative session, my administration supported Senate Bill 325 to strengthen privacy protections for educators, and recommended extending those protections to teachers holding initial certificates so that all public school staff are treated fairly.

Protecting educators' personal information is a common-sense safety measure. It allows teachers and staff to focus on their students and their work, while preserving Connecticut's broader commitment to open and accountable government.

6. Cell Phone Policy

Background: A growing body of peer reviewed research shows that constant access to cell phones and other personal electronic devices during the school day negatively affects student focus, learning, and mental health. National data show that since the early 2010s, rates of anxiety, depression, and self harm among adolescents have risen sharply, coinciding with the widespread adoption of smartphones and social media. Research summarized by pediatric health experts and scholars, including findings highlighted in *The Anxious Generation*, indicates that frequent phone checking fragments attention, increases classroom disruptions, and is

associated with higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. Studies also show that students spend a significant portion of the school day on their phones when unrestricted, often engaging with highly addictive social media and entertainment platforms.

In response to this growing evidence, educators, academics, and pediatric health professionals increasingly support clear limits on student access to personal electronic devices during instructional time. As of this year, at least 35 states have enacted legislation limiting cell phone use in schools, with many adopting bell-to-bell prohibitions during the instructional day. While Connecticut has begun to take steps to address this issue, effective implementation requires a clear and consistent statewide framework that includes stakeholder input, transparent communication with families, safe and secure storage of student devices, appropriate exemptions, and regular evaluation to ensure equitable and effective enforcement across districts.

CEA Position: CEA supports legislation establishing clear limits on student use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices during instructional time, including a bell-to-bell prohibition. We believe that this process should require transparent district level policy development with meaningful input from educators, parents, students, health professionals, and other stakeholders.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation establishing a clear statewide framework regarding use of cell phones and personal electronic devices during instructional time that includes a bell-to-bell prohibition.**

Yes, I support a ban, and introduced legislation this year to make it happen. The bill unfortunately did not pass the State Senate, but I am committed to continue working with lawmakers to pass a bell-to-bell ban. My support of this came from listening to you - CEA members - about the difference being "phone free" makes in the learning environment. We need to keep our students safe and focused.

Please use the space below to provide any comments or explanations from your responses to this section.

C. EDUCATION FUNDING & EQUITY

7. Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grants

Background: A Connecticut Supreme Court decision, *Horton v. Meskill*, requires the state to equalize funding for school districts based on each district's ability to pay. Adequate education funding for all districts is essential to a well-prepared and growing workforce in Connecticut. For Connecticut to honor its obligations to students and enhance its economic competitiveness, it

must meet its financial commitment to fund schools equitably and appropriately. That starts with enhancing the foundation of the ECS grant, which has not been increased since 2013, and tying it to inflation. The state's nearly \$200 million investment in district funding in 2026 was a meaningful step in supporting municipal budgets, but sustainable, long-term solutions are needed to ensure that educators and municipalities are provided the resources they need to best prepare all students to be successful adults.

CEA Position: ECS funding must be given the highest priority, even in difficult budget years, and enhanced to ensure that districts have what they need. Cuts in educational funding harm students, negatively impact teaching and learning, and can increase local property taxes. We do not support any reductions in the state's commitment to ECS funding and will continue to advocate for increasing the funding of school districts wherever possible.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation that protects and enhances education funding.**

I believe a student's potential should never be limited by their ZIP code. To move toward true equity, we need to understand the whole student and what they need to succeed.

I inherited a shift in our Education Cost Sharing formula that was started in 2018, and moved to speed up its implementation - accelerating funding for districts that have been historically underfunded. In addition, we significantly increased funding for excess costs, launched new programs like LEAP to address absenteeism, teacher apprenticeships, and expanded the number of school based health centers.

But these models were built for a different era. Our "foundation amount" was arbitrarily picked based on the state budget - not based on what a student needs. And there is no guarantee that those education dollars actually go into the classroom. That's why I established the Blue Ribbon Commission to modernize how we support our schools. This commission is currently evaluating how the state can better account for poverty, mental health, multilingual learners, and evolving enrollment patterns.

I've talked to a lot of teachers, superintendents, mayors, school administrators about these issues. The main cost drivers for local boards of education are: special education, health insurance for employees, and transportation. Here's what I'm thinking: (1) the state should take a more pro-active role in special education - we can work with districts to develop local centers of excellence to stop the expensive out-placements that lead to kids traveling significant distances to get the educational services they deserve; (2) every district should be in the State Partnership Plan - that saves you money and is (most likely) a better quality plan; (3) we need to work on how we organize bus routes on a more holistic basis.

And, I want a State Department of Education that is pro-actively working with districts on reading interventions, math tutoring, absenteeism, and fiscal management. SDE should have an integrated team ready to partner with teachers when we can all see that we need to do better for the kids.

If re-elected, I will lead the effort to implement a funding system that is transparent, equitable, and relentlessly focused on student achievement. By collaborating with educators, municipal

leaders, and parents, I will ensure that our state resources reach the classrooms where they are needed most, guaranteeing every child in Connecticut the high-quality public education they deserve.

8. Protecting Municipal Contributions for Education

Background: Property tax caps that penalize municipalities for supporting their schools beyond the “minimum” requirements result in depleting school resources, punishing students, and undermining local control. Schools have different needs across municipalities—most require more resources. Punishing cities and towns for investing more than the bare minimum into their schools is an ill-conceived policy that hurts students. It does not make sense to withhold state aid merely because a town chooses to responsibly fund its schools.

CEA Position: CEA opposes policies, including misguided property tax caps that discourage or penalize municipalities from investing in education. We oppose policies that penalize towns for investing more funding in their local schools.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly oppose legislation exploring or establishing property tax caps.**

I am firmly committed to providing meaningful property tax relief, but I believe the most effective way to help Connecticut families is by empowering our municipalities rather than imposing rigid constraints on local decision-making. Statewide property tax caps are a misguided approach that would strip local control and jeopardize the ability of towns to invest in their own schools, public safety, and infrastructure.

Our administration has pursued a different, more sustainable strategy: historic levels of state aid and providing towns more incentives to work together. By directing hundreds of millions in additional funding toward local education and municipal grants, we are giving cities and towns the resources they need to balance their budgets and support their residents without being forced to raise local property taxes. In addition, we have developed new incentives to allow towns to work through COGs and RESCs to share services.

We have also delivered direct relief to taxpayers by increasing the state income tax property tax credit to \$300 and establishing a statewide cap on local motor vehicle taxes to protect drivers in our higher-tax communities. Over the next four years, I will continue to partner with local governments to ensure our state is a more affordable place to live and raise a family.

9. Public Funds for Private Schools

Background: CEA believes that public dollars should support public schools. In the past year, increased federal emphasis on voucher programs have intensified efforts to expand programs that divert public education funding to private entities. Taxpayer funds should never be diverted

to privately operated schools through tax credits for individuals or businesses, direct payments, or any other means. These and other “money follows the child” style approaches to divert taxpayer funds include school vouchers, “educational access” or “opportunity scholarship” tax credits, and education savings accounts (ESAs). Proposals that divert funding from neighborhood public schools ultimately benefit the wealthy and short-change students in historically underfunded public schools.

CEA Position: CEA opposes legislation that diverts funding and resources from traditional public schools and opposes the creation of tax credits and other voucher-style measures that benefit wealthy families and elite private schools at the expense of traditional public schools. We also oppose efforts to have Connecticut participate in the Federal Voucher Program established in 2025.

☐ Agree with CEA's Position ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

[X] I will publicly oppose legislation and/or budgets that would establish tax credits or other school voucher-style programs that send public tax dollars away to private schools, especially when done at the expense of traditional public schools.

Participation in the federal school voucher program outlined in the Big Beautiful Bill remains premature at this time. My primary objective is ensuring every student across Connecticut benefits from a school that is both fully staffed and well maintained. Public revenue must not be siphoned away to subsidize private or charter education at the expense of our state public schools.

I've reviewed the information CEA has provided on vouchers. I remain steadfast in opposing any initiatives that divert critical resources from our public education system. A high-quality education should be a right for every student, not a privilege reserved for those in affluent zip codes or winners of a lottery. This commitment led me to establish a commission dedicated to reviewing our K-12 system and providing recommendations on funding equity and accountability to ensure more resources reach the classroom.

My plan is to review the final guidance on the federal program with you all once it is released.

10. Opponents to Public Education

Background: In recent years, well-funded organizations seeking to undermine our public education system have proliferated across Connecticut and the Nation. Groups like Families for Excellent Schools (FES), Achievement First, Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), Education Reform Now (ERN), and others promote an overreliance on standardized testing and the expansion of privately operated schools (including CMO-run charter schools), at the expense of traditional public schools. Increased state funding for new charter schools necessarily results in a reduction of available resources for some of our most historically underfunded schools.

Groups like the Yankee Institute threaten to undermine the teaching profession by seeking to do away with fair retirement plans, collective bargaining, and public employee unions altogether. Others like the American Legislative Exchange Council (aka ALEC), the State Policy Network, Americans for Prosperity, and the Walton Family Foundation seek to do all the above. Several of these organizations along with others have also supported the development and promotion of curricular materials that politicized and whitewash complex aspects of U.S. history. The U.S. Department of Education has increasingly encouraged states to adopt these political curricular materials. Together, the direction advocated by these organizations dilutes resources available for public schools, weakens teacher advocacy for students' needs, erodes the integrity of curriculum and instruction, and narrows the opportunities available to all students to learn.

CEA Position: CEA believes that organizations such as those noted above pose a threat to public education, undermine public employee unions, and conflict with our core mission of providing fair and equitable opportunities for all students.

☐ Agree with CEA's Position ☒ Oppose CEA's Position

[X] I will publicly oppose efforts by such organizations to privatize education, undermine the teaching profession, politicize curriculum, or divert funding away from public school districts.

Ensuring a premier, equitable public education system and respecting our dedicated workforce are non-negotiable priorities for my administration. I will publicly oppose efforts by organizations to privatize education, undermine the teaching profession, politicize curriculum, or divert funding away from public school districts.

True leadership demands open communication with all stakeholders, from labor organizations to business and policy groups. While we engage in dialogue with diverse perspectives, it does not mean we endorse every platform. My record is clear: I have consistently upheld collective bargaining rights and delivered historic investments in K-12 funding so every student can succeed. We have secured the long-term fiscal stability necessary on the state level to protect public schools and union pensions. We will continue to listen to all voices, but our decisions will always be guided by what is fair, equitable, and sustainable for Connecticut's students and families.

11. Support for English Learners

Background: The population of students whose dominant language is not English is approaching 1 in 10 students in Connecticut. Currently, Connecticut has among the worst education outcomes in the U.S. for English Learners. Other states with a larger population of English Learners (EL) have had success educating these students. Connecticut can make great progress if EL students are given adequate resources and personalized attention necessary to become fluent English speakers quickly. 2023 Legislation establishing a multilanguage learners' bill of rights took important steps in ensuring the educational success of these students; however, there are still significant barriers in place. For instance, Connecticut only provides bilingual education funds to schools that have 20 or more students speaking the same non-English language in the same school building. This threshold is far too narrow. Several schools throughout the state enroll students with multiple dominant languages but do not qualify

for funding from the state's bilingual education grant. Teachers in these schools need more assistance and resources to help EL students succeed.

CEA Position: CEA supports proposals to continue to expand bilingual funding to more schools. We support proposals that both increase funding for the bilingual education grant and expand eligibility to more schools.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ **I will publicly support legislation to increase funding and expand eligibility for the bilingual education grant and innovative programs like dual language programs.**

I was proud to propose and pass the legislation referenced that created the Multi-Language Learners Bill of Rights so that parents and students know the services that are available to help them fully participate in school. But, as you point out, there is more to do. We have an obligation - both legal and moral - to make sure every student has the support they need to succeed.

12. Special Education

Background: Special education services in Connecticut are under significant strain. The number of students requiring special education services continues to rise, while shortages of certified special education teachers and paraeducators persist. As a result, educator to student ratios in special education settings are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Excessive caseloads, growing administrative responsibilities, and extensive paperwork requirements make it challenging for educators to meet students' needs and remain in compliance with Individualized Education Program requirements.

While the legislature identified special education as a priority in 2025 and enacted several important policy changes, these efforts did not address many of the day-to-day realities facing special education educators in classrooms. Funding increases, including those related to high cost placements, help districts manage budgets but do not directly reduce strained educator workloads, improve staffing ratios, or enhance the quality of in district special education services. At the same time, the uncertainty of full federal government funding has placed additional pressure on local school districts.

Without meaningful investment in staffing and classroom level supports, students may not receive the individualized services they are entitled to and educators risk burnout and an unsustainable work environment. Addressing workload, staffing ratios, and funding is essential to ensuring high quality special education services and supporting both students and educators.

CEA Position: CEA supports policies and funding that reduce excessive workloads for special education educators, ensure appropriate educator to student ratios, and direct increased resources into special education classrooms so educators can meet student needs, comply with legal requirements, and deliver high quality services.

☒ **Agree with CEA's Position** ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ I will publicly support legislation and funding that improve staffing levels, address special education educator workloads, and ensure appropriate educator to student ratios in special education settings.

I support putting more resources directly into special education classrooms, helping districts hire and retain the staff they need, and making sure caseloads are manageable. When educators have the time and support to work with students, families, and colleagues, students get better services. We did a lot of work on special education in the 2025 legislative session, where we increased state financial support (through excess cost), incentivized districts to develop more in-district services, provided financial support for early interventions, and began the process of capping costs at private providers. However, we are at a point where bigger change is needed.

Over the past 6 years, we have seen special education costs significantly increase. The reasons for this are multifaceted. Complexity of need and cost of transportation are both factors. But another factor, unfortunately, is the growing private industry that looks at special education as a profit-making business. I have a different vision. I think the state should take a more proactive role in partnering with local districts on how we provide special education services. I want services provided locally, no more long commutes to out of state providers. Getting this right is one of the priorities for the next four years.

D. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

13. Collective Bargaining

Background: The right to be a union member is a fundamental employment protection under state and federal laws. America's labor unions have led the fight for working families, winning protections such as the 8-hour workday and the 40-hour workweek, overtime rights, and access to health care and retirement security. Today, the fight continues to retain these vital rights and to ensure safe and healthy workplaces. Following the 2018 Supreme Court decision in the case of Janus v. AFSCME, Connecticut must be a leader in protecting union rights. For teachers, collective bargaining allows their voices, ideas, and advocacy for students to be heard without fear of reprisal.

CEA Position: CEA opposes any legislative proposals to weaken or eliminate collective bargaining rights for teachers and other public employees, including proposals to limit bargaining on salary, benefits, or conditions of employment currently permitted under law.

☒ Agree with CEA's Position ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ I will publicly oppose any legislation weakening collective bargaining or the unions representing employees.

Collective bargaining is not just a right—it is a vital partnership that strengthens our entire education system. It ensures that those closest to the classroom—our teachers—have a seat at the table to advocate for the resources, safety, and working conditions necessary to help every student succeed.

We have seen the impact of this advocacy firsthand. When CEA members raised the alarm about the strain on our special education system and the need for more support, my administration listened and acted. That is why I was proud to work with you all and the legislature to increase special education funding over the biennium. That investment was a direct response to the needs identified by educators and districts, proving that when we work together, we can secure the real, tangible support our schools need.

I am committed to protecting the right to organize and ensuring that teacher voices remain central to policy discussions. Whether it is improving classroom safety, managing caseloads, or securing necessary funding, my administration is more effective when we are working in partnership with our unions to deliver results for Connecticut's students and families.

Please use the space below to provide any comments or explanations from your responses to this section.

D. TEACHER'S RETIREMENT & HEALTH CARE

14. Defined Benefit Pension Plan

Background: Some states have considered replacing traditional pension plans with defined contribution (401k-type) plans. Research indicates this is a flawed approach. Defined benefit pensions (DBs) have proven to be more cost-efficient than defined contribution accounts (DCs) due to higher investment returns and longevity risk pooling. When states look at shifting from a DB pension to DC accounts, such a shift does not close funding shortfalls and, in fact, can increase a state's retirement costs by requiring the state to operate multiple plans at that same time. Moreover, it is cost-efficient for teachers to remain outside of social security since boards of education would be required to pay the employer contribution if teachers were included in social security.

In recent years, the state legislature has also considered whether the state should continue to solely fund DB pensions for Connecticut's educators. Proposals in recent years included shifting the cost of these plans from the state to municipalities in a move that would impact school budgets, reduce resources available for teaching and learning, and result in higher property taxes for our residents. These proposals would do nothing more than put a target on educators' backs across the state and create further unfunded mandates for our towns and their residents.

CEA Position: Defined benefit pension plans should continue to be offered to all public employees. CEA opposes any weakening of the current defined benefit plan, including instituting any new tiers or including teachers in social security. In addition, CEA opposes any proposals to shift the cost of educators' pension plans from the state to municipalities.

☐ Agree with CEA's Position ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☒ I will publicly oppose legislation that would weaken the benefit structure for public school teachers.

☐ I will publicly oppose legislation that would shift the state's responsibility for teacher retirement to the municipalities.

Some people may forget this, but there was a goal of a three legged stool: pensions, Social Security and savings. Teachers have always been a little unique given that, in Connecticut, you do not participate in Social Security. Which is why that defined benefit pension is all the more important. I have spent the past 8 years trying to make sure we get that pension fund fully funded so you know even if we hit a recession, your retirement is secure.

15 Retired Teachers' Health Insurance Fund

Background: In 1989, the General Assembly established a Retired Teachers' Health Insurance Fund to partially subsidize health insurance for retired teachers and their spouses. Current law requires that active teachers contribute 1.25% of their salaries to this fund and the state and those retirees on Medicare contribute 33% of the cost of the TRB's health program to the health fund. For retirees and spouses under age 65, the retiree is paying virtually the full cost of the insurance. In the past the state has reduced its share, resulting in millions of dollars of lost revenue to the health fund. This occurred as recently as 2025 when the state reduced its contribution from 33% to 25% for one year. These reductions create greater risk and can threaten the long-term solvency of the Retired Teachers' Health Insurance fund if they continue.

CEA Position: CEA believes that the State should continue to meet its statutory responsibility and annually contribute its 33% share of funding to the Retired Teachers' Health Insurance Fund to ensure its long-term solvency.

☒ Agree with CEA's Position ☐ Oppose CEA's Position

☐ I will publicly oppose proposals that do not fully fund the state's share of the Retired Teachers' Health Insurance Fund.

The retired teachers health insurance trust fund is a promise the state has made that we will make sure you have *real* health care as you age. We saw with our pension funds what happens when politicians make promises and then kick the can down the road on meeting their obligations. We have a lot catching up to do with our teachers and state employee pension funds, and we are doing that work. And I will not let us repeat the same bad habits with our retired teachers health insurance fund.

Please use the space below to provide any comments or explanations from your responses to this section.

16. Drawing from your demonstrated record, please share with us what distinguishes you as a champion for teachers, students, and public education.

Championing public education requires more than just rhetoric; it requires the courage to stand up for the policies that support students, teachers, and their families. Since taking office, my administration has championed the foundational policies that allow families, and therefore students, to thrive.

I have also worked to ensure that every child enters the classroom with a fair start by putting Connecticut on a path to universal, affordable early childhood education. I believe deeply in public education, which is why I have focused on removing barriers for the next generation of teachers through apprenticeships and tuition support, and why I am committed to modernizing school funding so that no student's potential is limited by their zip code.

While national politics often threaten to undermine our values, I have consistently stood up against erratic and harmful policies, prioritizing the safety and stability of Connecticut's schools. My values align with the CEA because I know that for our students to thrive, our teachers must be respected, supported, and fairly compensated. I am committed to continuing this fight to ensure every student, regardless of their background, receives the high-quality education they deserve.