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**Testimony before the Education Committee**

**Ben Wenograd, AFT-Connecticut**

**March 10, 2008**

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Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Ben Wenograd. I am a Field Representative with AFT-Connecticut and have been since 2000. My job is to negotiate contracts as well as advocate for our members in grievance and arbitration proceedings.

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On behalf of the members of AFT, I am here to ask that you amend H.B. No. 5870, AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR CHANGES TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES to include language that would prohibit school administrators from directly changing the grades given to students by their teachers or from pressuring or ordering teachers to change such grades in violation of both objectively measurable standards, as well as the teachers' professional judgment.

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I think most people would agree that grade changing or undo pressure to do the same is wrong. The integrity of a grading system cannot be sustained if it can simply be overridden by someone who does not have day-to-day contact with the student.

Amazingly, while the idea of a grade being changed is certainly upsetting, there is no statute or state regulation which prohibits an administrator from either changing the grade assigned by a teacher or from ordering a teacher, under threat of insubordination, to do so.

As a Field Representative with the AFT, I represent teachers throughout the state. From my experience I can tell you two things: first, that grade changing – either by



direct action by an administrator or by the more subtle but equally disturbing practice of pressuring the teacher to change the grade him or herself, is occurring; and second, that no one knows how prevalent the practice is.

The lack of a state statute is, in some ways, the cause of both of these problems. Even though it feels wrong, teachers faced with an order to change a grade are told they do not have the right to say no. But having now done something that feels wrong, they are reluctant to then admit that it happened. There is no whistle blower statute to protect teachers who report such incidents, nor it is clear what exactly they would be reporting: if it is not illegal or otherwise prohibited, what's to report?

Many states have taken a legislative approach to this issue and I believe they have done a good job drafting practical and workable language. Those statutes are worth your consideration.

Therefore, I respectfully request that this committee amend the bill to change what I hope you agree is an unacceptable situation.