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*Testimony of Mary Loftus Levine  
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Before the Education Committee  
Raised Bill No. 1017 LCO No. 3621  
An Act Concerning the Consolidation of the State Department of  
Education  
and the Department of Higher Education

Monday, March 9, 2009

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Mary Loftus Levine, and I am the Director of Policy and Professional Practice for the Connecticut Education Association. I am here today to testify against Raised Bill No. 1017 which would eliminate the Department of Higher Education, placing the work and responsibilities of that department within the Department of Education, and creating a Bureau of Higher Education within the Department of Education.

Although we all are painfully aware of the economic challenges facing our state, we believe dismantling one of the most important engines of potential economic growth and development by virtually demoting the Department of Higher Education to one of many bureaus within an already overburdened and underfunded Department of Education is a mistake.

We believe such a consolidation would hinder the focus needed now more than ever to advance both Pre-K through 12 and Higher Education goals and initiatives. These two entities are very different animals, and each needs and deserves specialized leadership, expertise, and structure to be successful.

Recognizing the need to restore our economic stature, the current administration in Washington has made education a priority once again, and has backed up rhetoric with a significant investment by sending real dollars to the states.

If Connecticut is to remain competitive as a state, dismantling the department which represents one of the crown jewels of our education system is short-sighted and not economically prudent.

We ask the Education Committee to reject this bill. Thank you.