



**Connecticut Education
Association**

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Written testimony of Mr. Philip Apruzzese

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Connecticut Education Association

For the Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding

February 9, 2009

Good morning, Senator Daily and Representative Staples, and members of the Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding. My name is Phil Apruzzese and I am a fifth grade teacher from Wethersfield and president of the Connecticut Education Association, representing over 40,000 educators across CT. I am here to share with the committee our concerns over raised bill 808, An Act Increasing Fees and Fines. Our first consideration is the serious economic burden the proposed increase in fees would place on our members. While we understand (better than most) the fiscal challenges facing our state, it seems unfair and unrealistic to try to make up a hole in the budget on the backs of teachers. Our members are facing the same frightening uncertainties as everyone else - potential loss of jobs, higher and higher insurance costs, working harder for less, and at the same time being expected to singlehandedly solve problems created well beyond their classroom walls. Resources are not available, children are coming to school less, not more, prepared, and yet teachers are expected to constantly do more and more with less and less.

To make matters worse, another bill has been filed which has the potential to significantly raise the number of Continuing Education Units teachers must earn to maintain and meet ever higher certification standards. In another committee, a program to implement a new mentoring program for new teachers that leads to further certification is in jeopardy due to lack of funding, and yet the state is contemplating charging teachers more for their certificates while once again not fulfilling its end of the bargain? We ask this committee to rethink this proposal in the context of these other legislative proposals.

Finally, absent a comprehensive and targeted funding stream for public education and putting more unfunded state mandates on teachers, we oppose any increase in fees. Our members already do, and will continue to, face enough challenges. The teacher labor market, unlike many others, has serious shortages. We ask you not to create more obstacles to attracting, recruiting, and retaining the best and brightest to our state. Thank you.