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*Testimony of  
Mark Waxenberg, Director Government Relations  
Connecticut Education Association*

*Testimony  
Before the  
Education Committee*

*Senate Bill #1140 'An Act Concerning Negotiations Between Chief Elected Officials and Local Boards of Education and a Study of the Regionalization of Certain School District Operations,'  
Senate Bill #1142 'An Act Concerning Relief of State Mandates on School Districts,' and  
House Bill #6688 'An Act Concerning Education Grants'*

*March 23, 2009*

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. I am Mark Waxenberg and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association.

I am here to comment on three bills before you today, Senate Bill #1140 'An Act Concerning Negotiations Between Chief Elected Officials and Local Boards of Education and a Study of the Regionalization of Certain School District Operations,' Senate Bill #1142 'An Act Concerning Relief of State Mandates on School Districts,' and House Bill #6688 'An Act Concerning Education Grants.'

Senate Bill #1140 'An Act Concerning Negotiations Between Chief Elected Officials and Local Boards of Education and a Study of the Regionalization of Certain School District Operations.' The Connecticut Education Association (CEA) is adamantly opposed to this legislation. Unfortunately, we have seen political gamesmanship at the local level regarding the funding of education over the years and have tried to prevent this from occurring. The effects of inadequate funding in Connecticut have spawned two lawsuits and forced our legislature to act in a more equitable and complete manner in funding education. What this legislation proposes is to allow a municipal leader to take back money from money that has

been budgeted to a board of education. The determination of a fiscal emergency by the chief official of a municipality is nothing more than an opportunity or a license to steal money budgeted for education purposes. Article Eight of the Connecticut Constitution specifically cites education and the funding of such as a legislative requirement and responsibility. Allowing a chief elected official of a municipality to take money allocated for education is an invitation to disaster and should not be given serious consideration by this committee.

Senate Bill #1142 'An Act Concerning Relief of State Mandates on School Districts.' Section 2 line 21 which moves the notification date from April 1 to May 1 for teacher notification of nonrenewal of his/her contract is objectionable to the CEA. Should the necessity occur where a nonrenewal is issued, time should be given for that teacher to seek new employment in other districts. Such a change would also allow superintendents to "play games" when budget time rolls around. I would remind the committee that the law was previously changed from February 1 to April 1, to accommodate budget timelines at the local level. This proposed change is not warranted and places teachers' employment in limbo for an extra month which is not needed.

CEA is concerned with the change in line 200 in Section 6 of the bill which modifies the present biennial reporting of indoor air quality to a five-year period. We all recognize that poor indoor air quality is a health risk for children and adults in the education community and, therefore, established the underlying legislation. A change to this existing law in our view, would be an abrogation of the state's responsibility to the teachers and children to provide a safe and healthy education environment.

Section 7 line 275 which eliminates the requirement of a local or regional school board of education to have written policies on parent-teacher communication, we believe, is not good education policy at a time we are trying to engage parents more in the conversations necessary about their child's education. Therefore, we oppose the revision of the language for Sec 10-221.

House Bill #6688 'An Act Concerning Education Grants.' It is clear that funding adjustments to magnet schools need to be made and this bill does that. We support this bill and its attempt at enhancing choices within the public schools in Connecticut.