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

*Testimony
Before the
Government Administration and Elections Committee*

*H.J. Resolution 114 'Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State
Constitution Concerning the Balanced Budget Amendment'*

March 23, 2009

Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. Good afternoon, my name is Mark Waxenberg and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association. I am here to today to comment on H.J. Resolution 114, 'Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning the Balanced Budget Amendment.'

Article Twenty-Eight of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut requiring an annual balanced budget was adopted November 25, 1992 during a period of time when there was fiscal unrest and after an income tax was imposed in our state. Though the annual balanced budget amendment is theoretically a good fiscal promise to the public, it can cause peaks and valleys in the way Connecticut serves its citizens. Simply stated, during the good times benefits and services to our citizens are enhanced, and during lean times those benefits and services are reduced or deleted.

This proposed amendment would "smooth" the peaks and lift the valleys so we have a stable set of expected benefits for our citizens. This theory is not new and was first unveiled by John Maynard Keynes in the 1920s and was noted as the economic blueprint for the twenty-first century.

I do not pretend to be an economist, but as a proponent of public education, all we have to do is examine the funding of public education in Connecticut. Two years ago the budget called for unprecedented increases in public education funding, while today – two years later – we are

reducing the state's contribution to public education by 14 percent or \$270 million and filling that whole will all of the stimulus money from the federal government.

We can not and should not continue to amend public policy annually based on the estimated revenues. We need to look long-term and be able to plan with a vision that extends beyond an annual budget or two-year election cycle.

This proposed amendment may be strange to some, but to me it's an opportunity for our state to do long-term planning and to be able to stick to that plan, rather than suffer the unknowns of what may change tomorrow.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.