CEA
RETIRED

TESTIMONY OF JON-PAUL RODEN,
PRESIDENT, CEA-RETIRED,
THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (CEA)
IN SUPPORT OF

H.B. 5400 - AAC REEMPLOYMENT OF RETIRED TEACHERS

H.B. 5402 – AAC EXPENSES FOR HEALTH BENEFIT PLANS
UNDER THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT FUND

BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2010

Good morning Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jon-Paul Roden. I am the President of CEA-Retired, the Connecticut Education Association's affiliate for retired members.

I am here to comment on Raised Bill 5400 as well as Raised Bill 5402 which have been requested by the State Teachers' Retirement Board (STRB).

Raised Bill 5400 concerns the reemployment of retired teachers when school districts find that they are unable to fill positions with qualified non-retired candidates. This is a proposed modification of the law that would allow a retired teacher to work for more than one school year as long as they do not exceed the earnings limitation but removing a sentence defining the term "temporary."

It just makes good sense for school districts to be able to hire a retired teacher who has the background of college course work and years of classroom experience as opposed to a non-experienced substitute when no qualified candidates are available prior to the filling of the provision.

As noted previously, Raised Bill 5400 as written would limit a retiree's ability to be reemployed beyond one school year. It would seem more practical to amend the proposed legislation to remove the one year limit on the number of years that a reemployed retiree can work, as long as the annual earnings limit is not exceeded. I believe that CEA has already or will propose language that would address this concern.

As a retiree, I believe Raised Bill 5402 is an extremely important bill that would address a need for members of the State Teachers Retirement Board and impact all of Connecticut's retired teachers.

We all receive countless mailings from health care providers promoting their products. Each is designed to "sell" that company's product and most recipients are overwhelmed with the number and complexities of these offerings. I can only guess at how the members of the Teachers' Retirement Board deal with the variety and complexities of plans without being "experts" in the health care field themselves as they review all aspects of the administration of the TRB plan including such things as writing and analyzing RFP's, calculating the annual premiums, insuring that their plan fulfills its requirements all while making sure that they have considered all cost-saving initiatives.

In the past, the STRB has had a health care consultant who advised them on all aspects of the administration of the plan that they offer. Since the TRB does not have anyone on its staff that has the resources or expertise to provide this service and since the September state budget mitigation plan eliminated the funding for a health plan consultant, it is essential that a position be restored in order to provide the guidance necessary for the Board members to do their job. The bill allows the health care consultant costs, up to $150,000 annually, to be paid directly from the retired teacher's health insurance fund as opposed to general state funds. I understand that OPM supports this proposal and as a pension and health care fund recipient, I would ask that you do so also.

Thank you for your time and consideration.