



AFT Connecticut
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Healthcare
Higher Education
Public Employees
PSRP
Teachers

Testimony of
Ben Wenograd, Field Representative
AFT Connecticut

**HB 6328 An Act Concerning Timelines for Municipal Binding
Arbitration**

Labor and Public Employees Committee
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35 Marshall Road
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860/257-9782
Fax: 860/257-8214
Toll Free: 888/398-3373
www.aftct.org

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My name is Ben Wenograd. I am speaking today in opposition to HB6238.

I have been a Field Representative at AFT Connecticut for the past ten years. Previously I served in a similar position at CSEA, and before that was a staff attorney at NAGE/IPBO. I am responsible for bargaining contracts for Teachers, under the TNA, State Employees (SERA), Private Sector employees (NLRB) and for Board of Education and Town employees under the Municipal Employees Relations Act. In my previous jobs I worked primarily with the M.E.R.A. statute. I have negotiated countless bargaining contracts over these past 15 years and am convinced that this proposed change would be harmful to municipal employers and employees alike.

In teacher negotiations, we have strict and non-waivable time lines. As a result, the parties enter negotiations knowing that arbitration is coming up shortly. Both sides must prepare not for reasoned discussion and exploration of common interests, but instead must immediately prepare for battle. For the employer, lawyers (and their billable hours) are brought in from the beginning. Little actual negotiating takes place. Rather, the parties position themselves for arbitration and begin incurring costs at the onset. Any party that fails to prepare for arbitration is at a huge disadvantage, because if you don't reach an agreement at the designated time you are very quickly forced to begin arbitration. Thus in teacher negotiations, much of the cost of arbitration must be absorbed even when an agreement is reached.

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