

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Ed Leavy, Executive Union Representative
State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A

H.B. No. 5016 An Act Implementing the Governor's Recommendations Concerning General Government

Appropriations Committee
March 8, 2012

I am testifying today as a representative of the 1180 educators in the Connecticut Technical School System. I am proud of our teachers. They are dedicated professionals who work hard to help our students develop the academic and trade skills necessary to provide Connecticut with the work force our employers need. When their careers are over, they will have earned their retirement. Almost one-third of our instructors are in Teachers' Retirement. Section 4 of House Bill 5016 makes significant changes in that retirement, asking retirees to pay more for their medical insurance at a time in their lives when these increased costs are more difficult to absorb.

Section 4 (a) of the bill raises the healthcare cost to the retiree while reducing the State's contribution. These changes will cost the average retired worker \$350 a year, not a small amount to people on fixed incomes. Many of our teachers spent the first part of their careers in the trade, and so retire with perhaps 20 years of service to the State. Their pension will be fairly small, and they are not eligible for social security from their teaching positions. To raise their medical costs 20% would create real financial hardship for our members in Teachers' Retirement.

It is certainly ironic that the Governor has declared this legislative session "The Education Session," and yet this bill looks to harm those people who have dedicated their lives to educating children. I have been to a number of public hearings of the education committee recently, and heard speaker after speaker talk about our need to make a greater commitment to education as a state. We cannot pledge our support for education, and then not honor our commitment to our retired teachers' health insurance. Teachers throughout the state, including those in the CTHSS, have faced wage freezes and reductions in benefits. They

have continued to work tirelessly to educate our young people. They deserve our appreciation and gratitude. They do not deserve to have their retire medical insurance treated as just one more way the State can save money by asking them to pay more. Thank you