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Remarks of Dr. Linette Branham
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Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 299
AAC Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes

March 5, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Linette Branham, and I'm the Director of Policy and Professional Practice at the Connecticut Education Association. I'm here to comment on Senate Bill 299 regarding the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) permit.

This bill states that the State Board of Education shall issue a *permit* to anyone who has been certified by the United States Armed Forces as an instructor or assistant instructor in a JROTC program, and that person may then be employed by a local school district to teach the courses in the JROTC program in that district.

When PA 11-179 was passed last year, it caused great confusion about what credentials JROTC instructors needed to have to teach in schools. The State Department of Education issued a memo to superintendents saying that JROTC instructors didn't need to be certified to teach in CT. However, if they taught content courses that students got credit for, such as in the sciences, the JROTC instructors would need to hold a regular CT

teaching certificate. This caused a number of problems. The new commissioner rectified the situation for the short term by creating and issuing a special JROTC certificate to those who hold a JROTC certificate issued by the US Armed Forces. A long-term solution through legislation needs to be put in place so that, despite changes in leadership in Connecticut, JROTC teachers have a stable structure through which they become certified to teach in CT.

Senate Bill 299, unfortunately, works against both the commissioner's short-term solution and what JROTC instructors need. In our certification system, a permit is different from a certificate. A *teaching permit* is a document that has a short-term validity period and allows a person to teach while working to meet the requirements for a certificate, but doesn't allow that person to be part of the teacher's retirement system. A *certificate* is a document that is issued to a person who has met all of the requirements set by the State Board of Education to teach a particular subject.

JROTC teachers need to hold a certificate issued by the State Board of Education so those who currently teach, and those who will teach in years to come, can be part of teacher's retirement. JROTC teachers make valuable contributions to the education of our students through the course content, leadership skill development, and community service components of the JROTC program. They participate in the activities of their school communities as all teachers do, and deserve recognition for this that comes through being members of the teacher's retirement system, as are other teachers.

I ask you, then, to replace the proposed language in Senate Bill 299 so that JROTC are issued a CT teaching *certificate*, not a *permit*, based on the

requirements and validity of the JROTC certificate issued by the United States Armed Forces.

Thank you for recognizing the value that our military personnel bring to our schools and students, and for your consideration of this matter.