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Healthcare  
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Testimony of  
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Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee  
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**HB 5499 AN ACT ENCOURAGING STUDENTS IN TEACHER PREPARATION  
PROGRAMS TO TUTOR CHILDREN FROM POORLY PERFORMING SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Steve McKeever and I am the First Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of unions representing more than 10,000 of Connecticut's teachers. Prior to my election as First Vice President, I was a high school teacher for 17 years in the Middletown public school system. I am here today to testify in favor of the concept outlined in HB 5499.

AFT Connecticut has long supported requiring students in teacher preparation programs to have earlier, more frequent, diverse and substantive field experiences. Getting prospective teachers into the classroom not only gives them a feel for the profession, but begins to give them the formal experience they need to become an effective educator. HB 5499 would add another dimension to teacher preparation programs by incentivizing future teachers to tutor students in low performing school districts.

Teaching is an extremely difficult, but rewarding profession. Teaching in low performing districts can be especially challenging. New teachers often find it overwhelming to manage the competing needs of students in these districts, which are very often in high poverty urban and rural communities. As a result, superintendents in low performing districts can struggle to retain teachers. By encouraging college students to spend more time in these districts tutoring children, they may develop relationships and an affinity for the community. Not only will they likely be more experienced and less easily discouraged teaching these students, but they may be more willing to begin their teaching careers in these high need districts.

The State Department of Education has convened the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) to examine teacher preparation programs in the state. Rather than fully endorse loan forgiveness for future teachers who tutor students in low performing districts, I would instead ask this committee to encourage EPAC to consider the types and diversity of field experiences within the context of revamped teacher preparations as a whole. EPAC is expected to make its recommendations to this committee by April 1, 2013.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I urge you to support HB 5499 and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

