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Legal Services

Christopher P. Hankins, Esq.
Melanie I. Kolek, Esq.
Adrienne R. DeLucca, Esq.
Capitol Place, Suite 500
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106-8001
860-525-5641, 800-842-4316
Fax: 860-525-8818
Fax: 860-725-6304
www.cea.org

Affiliated with the
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
CHRISTOPHER P. HANKINS, LEGAL COUNSEL

CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

BEFORE THE

CHILDREN COMMITTEE

REGARDING

SENATE BILL NO. 821

“AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANDATED REPORTERS OF CHILD
ABUSE AND NEGLECT”

FEBRUARY 14, 2013

My name is Christopher P. Hankins and I am Legal Counsel for the Connecticut Education Association. I am commenting on several important aspects of Senate Bill No. 821.

1. Teachers are on the front line of reporting child abuse or neglect since, by being with children for a major portion of the day, they are in the unique position to recognize circumstances where children are, have been or could be in harm's way. This is why teachers are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect under the law. Anything in the statutes that would strengthen the protection afforded to teachers or anyone who reports suspected child abuse and neglect is welcome.
2. As to Section 1 of Senate Bill 821: The current language of Connecticut General Statutes Section 17a-101e (a) has a generalized prohibition of not discriminating or retaliating against an employee for making a good faith report of child abuse and neglect. The addition of proposed subsection (2) underscores the importance of mandatory reporting and further delineates the protection of reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to specify that an employee cannot be "hindered or prevented" from making report. Further, this subsection will further preempt a school district policy that requires a teacher to report child

abuse or neglect to the school administration as it will give the school employee a clearer indication of the importance of directly reporting child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). After the initial report to the DCF, the school employee can then follow the internal reporting policy of the school district.

3. As to Section 2 of Senate Bill 821: The proposed additional language of a subsection (3) of Connecticut General Statutes Section 31-51m (b) strengthens the protection against retaliation for an employee who has reported suspected child abuse or neglect. This dovetails with the increase protection of Section 1 of Senate Bill 821.