

Testimony



Testimony of
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Labor & Public Employees Committee
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HB 6416 AN ACT CONCERNING STATE CHARTER SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. My name is Nickimmy Hayes and I am an Organizer for AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of unions representing nearly 29,000 public and private sector employees including state employees, nurses, healthcare workers, teachers and other school personnel. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 6416 An Act Concerning State Charter School Employees.

AFT Connecticut supports this bill for two important reasons. The first being if we were organizing in the general public school sector any union petition for that respective municipality would be filed with the local Board of Education. We do not believe the process for state charter schools should be any different. Uniformity is key to a process as sensitive as this. Having one neutral place, such as the Connecticut State Board of Education, to present the petitions to would keep the process simple for all involved.

Secondly, HB 6416 would give the employees of a charter school the protection of organizing without the fear of their employer knowing who signed a union petition. There are some charter school governing councils which include their school principals. A charter school governing council acts as like a board of education for purposes of collective bargaining and usually consists of the operator's board members, as well as principals and directors of the schools. That would definitely be a problem if a petition of teacher signatures were handed directly to management.

One of the first questions a worker asks before they decide to sign a union authorization petition is, "Who will see this? If my boss sees this, will I get fired?" The fear people feel during a union drive is very real. The current statute does not take the unique governance of a charter school into account. As a result, a majority of workers would be too frightened to sign and that is a hindrance to their right to organize without fear or intimidation. Handing over the petition to the State Board of Education would solve this problem because they would act as a neutral third party, such as the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations acts for Municipal Employees.

AFT Connecticut urges you to support HB 6416 because it would provide workers the right to choose a union free from employer intimidation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this very important bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.