



Advocating for teachers  
and public education

**Connecticut Education  
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*Testimony*

*Ray Rossomando*

*Connecticut Education Association*

*Before the*

***Public Health Committee***

***HB5746 AAC A Task Force on Childhood Obesity***

*February 26, 2013*

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, Research and Policy Development Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents 43,000 members who are active and retired teachers across the state.

Everyone agrees that for Connecticut to make real progress toward closing the achievement gap, all hands must be on deck. Children facing the greatest challenges in the classroom, quite often experience poor access to nutrition and health care, as well as other challenges and needs associated with poverty. Consequently, public schooling in Connecticut must be about more than simply what happens in the classroom. It must also be about the daily needs of students and their access to services, support, and resources that are enriching to the mind, body, and readiness for learning.

We are testifying today in support of public health bills that would help address these needs. **CEA strongly supports HB 5746**, which would establish a task force to develop a state-wide plan to address childhood obesity.

Connecticut broke ground when it passed a landmark school nutrition bill that kicked sugary drinks out of schools in 2005. Over the past 10 years there has been growing public awareness about the perils of poor nutrition.

Nevertheless, the challenge to raise public awareness and consider policies that further reverse childhood obesity and poor nutrition remains. A more comprehensive approach to addressing obesity would go a long way toward improving public health, education, and even the economy as we consider ways to integrate locally grown and produced foods into our solutions.

We think it is also important to involve teachers in the development of comprehensive approaches to not only address obesity, but build awareness among children about food options and healthy eating habits. Much progress has been made already, but there is more work to be done – especially when children in the classroom learn about “go, slow and whoa” foods, only to be offered contradictory messages in the school lunch line.

Thank you.