



Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Education Committee

March 12th, 2014

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee,

We submit this testimony on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions who represent 200,000 working men and women from every city and town in our great state on the following:

We oppose S.B. 425 An Act Concerning the State Education Resource Center. The Connecticut AFL-CIO has taken a position that transparency should be required for any entity that receives any public funding. In its own report to the General Assembly dated January 15, 2014, SERC states that 94% of its budget is funded with federal dollars passed through the State Department of Education and state appropriations. It makes no sense why an entity that is overwhelmingly funded with public dollars and serves a core public mission would be considered a quasi-public agency. There is nothing "quasi" about SERC. In order to preserve transparency and General Assembly oversight of SERC's key role in delivering quality public education, we urge the committee to reject this bill and instead follow the precedent set by Public Act 13-286, which clarifies that SERC is a state agency for purposes of contracting requirements. Any entity that relies on taxpayer dollars to fund 94% of its budget is a state agency.

We support H.B. 5523 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Paraprofessional Staffing Levels. While the AFL-CIO has supported maintaining teacher levels and funding efforts, tight budget constraints in most municipalities have drastically reduced the staffing levels of paraprofessionals. These reduced levels have also lead to the disruption of a paraprofessional's primary role in the education process as they are often rotated into other roles outside of classrooms as well as adding burdens to families of the children that need additional attention of paraprofessionals. This is not fair to the student, the teacher or the class they are normally assigned to. We are hopeful that this bill will go forward to address the full impact of reductions and the necessary value of paraprofessionals within all schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

Todd G. Berch

Field Director