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Raised Bill 5359: An Act Establishing The Public-Private Partnership Commission

Committee on Government Administrations and Elections
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As President of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, last month I had the opportunity to meet with the Commissioner of Education and other State officials concerning discussions the Department of Education was having with IBM to form a partnership for the reopening of J.M. Wright Technical High School in Stamford. I participated in three meetings, including one with a representative from IBM. I was surprised that the Education Committee was not represented in any of those meetings. In fact, most legislators learned of these discussions when they were informed by the SVFT or AFT-CT. Ultimately, it was decided that a partnership Connecticut Technical High School System and IBM was not feasible at this time. While I strongly agree with the decision that was made, I was concerned by the process that I witnessed. I believe Raised Bill 5359 addresses many of those concerns.

A Commission on Public-Private Partnerships will ensure that more stakeholders have a voice in exploring the feasibility of public-private ventures. Representation from both political parties in the Senate and the House, the Governor's office, and the Department of Administrative Services ensures that all proposed partnerships will be carefully reviewed. As Representative Cafero stated in his testimony, these projects can be costly, and careful consideration is needed. Public hearings should also be required. Though the process of committee review and public hearings is often described as unwieldy, it is necessary to ensure that projects are carefully examined and that the opinions of all affected parties are heard.

I do have concerns that the limit of five public-private partnership projects may be removed by Raised Bill 5359. It is my belief that public interest and corporate interest are rarely so aligned that these projects benefit everyone involved. The compelling issue, however, is not whether we have more or fewer public-private partnerships, but that the one we do have are the result of

careful deliberation in a transparent process. The Commission described in this bill is an important step in ensuring that transparency.

Thank you.