



Testimony of
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Labor & Public Employees Committee Public Hearing
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***SB 219 An Act Concerning the
Municipal Employee Retirement System Contribution Rate***

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. My name is Shellye Davis and I am a paraprofessional in the Hartford school district. I am also the President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals and the Jurisdictional Vice President for Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel at AFT Connecticut, a diverse union of nearly 29,000 members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in opposition to SB 219, An Act Concerning the Municipal Employee Retirement System Contribution Rate.

The Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS) has been a successful partnership between municipalities and their enrolled employees. It is an affordable mechanism to provide meaningful deferred compensation so that public servants can retire in dignity with a pension. Both the employer and its employees make contributions into the system.

In the past, municipal employers enjoyed lower contribution rates than they currently do, and at one time the employer rate was lower than the employee rate. At that time, there was no effort to lower the employee rate. In fact, on the whole, employer and employee rates have been relatively equitable throughout the history of MERS.

Employers and employees have acted responsibly and faithfully made their contributions to MERS. As a result, the pension fund is over 85% funded. There is no urgency that would justify a significant change in employee contribution rates at this time. This places an unfair burden on employees and doing so would be a significant hardship for my members, who are by in large relatively low wage workers.

On their behalf I urge you to reject SB 219. Thank you.