



Testimony of
Stephen McKeever, First Vice President
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

Veterans' Affairs Committee Public Hearing
February 25, 2014

***HB 5299 AN ACT CONCERNING THE FINDINGS OF THE MILITARY
OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TASK FORCE***

Good afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessey and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. My name is Steve McKeever and I serve as First Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing nearly 29,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals and other school personnel. It is on their behalf that I submit this testimony.

We support most of the proposals in this bill. We believe that our society owes our veterans an opportunity for employment when they complete their tours of duty. Many veterans have extensive training in their particular areas of expertise. We applaud you for recognizing this and commend your efforts to enable veterans to quickly find meaningful employment. Two very deserving examples are allowing veterans who have military police experience to apply for jobs as civilian police officers and allowing veterans to apply their military driving experience to satisfy requirements for special driving endorsements or permits.

In both cases, and others, veterans are being allowed to use their military training as sufficient experience to waive examinations in this state. However, in all cases there is a caveat that their military training has to be in the field in which they seek employment. To operate a motor vehicle, the bill states: "...prior to the separation, held a military operator's license for motor vehicles of the same class as that for which such applicant has applied, the commissioner shall waive all of the examination." In other words, before the Commissioner can waive any certification examination, the applicant must have the type of training needed to obtain that license. We support this wholeheartedly.

We do have significant concerns however, with the language in section 5, which states that agencies will take the necessary steps to accept military experience, including spouses, to gain temporary teaching certificates. Throughout this bill it states that applicant must have equivalent training before any waiving of licensing requirements can occur, however it does not apply to teaching certifications. We are opposed to giving temporary teaching certificates to individuals who have no training in education. Currently, before a person can be awarded a teaching certificate they must demonstrate sufficient content knowledge and pedagogy in their subject endorsement area. They must also have training in special education and child psychology, including social and emotional disorders. In addition, prior to a school district being

able to hire the teacher, he or she must be fingerprinted and have an FBI background check. These are necessary to ensure that we hire qualified teachers and keep our children safe.

To be clear, we are not opposed to giving temporary teaching certificates to veterans or their spouses who meet these standards. We are simply asking that this bill be amended to ensure that the applicants have qualified educational training, just as it does throughout the rest of this bill.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony. I am available for further discussion. Please contact our lobbyist, Jennifer Berigan, if you would like to speak further.