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TESTIMONY OF
THE CONNECTICUT PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION
BEFORE
THE LEGISLATURE'S GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE
1:00 PM, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015
ROOM 2A, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Good morning. My name is Don Romoser. I am appearing in my capacity as President for the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association ("CTPTA") to testify in support of HB 6748 AAC Nonpartisan Membership On Boards Of Education.

CTPTA is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing quality education for all children in Connecticut. CTPTA has approximately 44,000 members.

CTPTA strongly supports HB 6748 AAC Nonpartisan Membership On Boards of Education.

Connecticut is one of the few remaining states that does not allow towns the right to determine their own election protocol for Board of Education members - It's time to change this. Connecticut PTA's proposal would change state statute and provide towns with the choice, should they so decide, to conduct a Board of Education election process that is void of party affiliation. This is not a mandate and does not require funding, it merely provides towns the choice to decide for themselves if the election process for Board of Education members should remain partisan-based or be changed to a non-partisan process.

As it stands today Board of Education candidates in Connecticut are, with rare exception, placed on the municipal ballot because of the decision of just a select few on a town's political nominating committee.

Connecticut PTA believes that this process is flawed for the following reasons:

- It often hinders great candidates from participating and contributing at the Board of Education level because they are not interested in participating at the local political Town Committee level.
- Partisan-based Boards of Education, while well-intentioned, foster decisions along party lines that may advance the agenda of the political



party but is not always in the best interest of educating Connecticut's children.

- The listing of candidates by party on the ballot can and sometimes does result in a candidate being elected because of their party affiliation rather than their qualifications.
- Boards of Education members must be able to think first of the child.

Connecticut is one of the few states, and the only one in New England, that does not allow local municipalities the choice to conduct Board of Education elections in a nonpartisan manner.

According to a study by Virginia Tech, 87% of school board members nationwide are nonpartisan community representatives. Most, 66% consider school board membership as fulfilling a civic duty. Almost 2/3rds of school board members have no plan to seek further political office at any time.

Boards of Education fulfill a unique role within Connecticut government. Because they are responsible for disbursement of State and Federal funds, they are considered not only a local entity but also an agency of the State. This unique agency position begs for the best, most community-minded individuals with diverse viewpoints, new ideas and an interest in education to serve on local Boards of Education.

We must acknowledge that due to current statute not allowing local choice for nonpartisan school boards, some have questioned potential conflicts with minority representation legislation. If a town chooses to hold completely nonpartisan elections for their Board of Education, no candidate would be affiliated with a political party. Therefore, there would be no majority nor minority party. Candidates would run for office as individuals and members would serve the board based on their own beliefs and merits.

Given the unique quality of each town in Connecticut, Connecticut PTA believes that each town should have a choice. Whether it is physical size, population density, economic composition, the number of viable political parties or the roles of unaffiliated voters, each town has its' own character and challenges. Each town should select the type of board that they feel is most representative and workable for their community and children.



Connecticut PTA encourages the legislature to adopt statewide legislation allowing for municipalities to have the choice to create nonpartisan Boards of Education.

Therefore CTPTA respectfully asks that you favorably report HB 6748.

This completes my testimony. Thank you for your consideration.

About Connecticut PTA

Connecticut PTA comprises over 44,000 members consisting of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools and well-being of children. PTA is a registered 501(c) (3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education, children's health and child welfare. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health and welfare of children and youth.