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An affiliate of the  
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*Written Testimony of*

***Sheila Cohen***

*President of the*

***Connecticut Education Association***

*Before the Education Committee*

***Re: HB 6974 An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The  
Achievement Gap Task Force Concerning The Creation Of A Director  
Of Reading Initiatives At The Department Of Education***

***March 11, 2015***

Good morning, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Sheila Cohen, President of the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents over 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state.

I am testifying today in support of HB 6974 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Achievement Gap Task Force Concerning the Creation of a Director of Reading Initiatives at the Department of Education.

CEA supports the creation of a Director of Reading Initiatives to assist school districts in implementing practices that will narrow the achievement gap in reading and literacy. However, I am speaking today to ensure that when such a position is created, thoughtful consideration be given to what the director should know and be able to do.

We ask that the criteria used to hire someone for this directorship mirror the criteria used by districts in hiring their own reading consultants and literacy coaches. This means that in order to be considered qualified, a candidate must not only possess a teaching certification in a literacy-related field, but that he or she must also possess either an undergraduate or graduate degree in reading or reading consultancy. HB 6974 does not include any such parameters.

It is imperative that any person in a position of decision-making authority at the State Department of Education possess background knowledge and experience in the area he or she will oversee. To that end, CEA urges the members of this committee to consider including requirements for the position that would ensure that the Director of Reading Initiatives is a qualified leader in the field of literacy.

Thank you.