



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

SB 926 An Act Concerning Unsubstantiated Allegations of Abuse or Neglect by School Employees
SB 927 An Act Concerning Seclusion and Restraint in Schools

Children's Committee
February 24, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children's Committee. My name is Steve McKeever and I am First Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of local unions representing nearly 30,000 public and private sector workers including approximately 4,000 paraprofessionals and 11,000 teachers. It is on their behalf that I am here to testify on SB 926 An Act Concerning Unsubstantiated Allegations of Abuse or Neglect by School Employees and SB 927 An Act Concerning Seclusion and Restraint in Schools.

Abuse and neglect are very serious matters that need to be addressed so we can protect our children. In some cases individuals who are suspected of neglect or abuse are investigated and the claim is unsubstantiated. SB 926 protects those individuals by requiring all records to be expunged within five days of the completion of the investigation. We strongly support this bill and hope that you will act favorably upon it.

We support SB 927 An Act Concerning Seclusion and Restraint in Schools; however we do have some concerns regarding the time limits for seclusion. A sweeping mandate on time limits does not allow for districts to write Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that are best for specific children. To be clear, we are not suggesting that students be in seclusion for any longer than necessary to ensure their safety and the safety of the students around them. We are suggesting that these types of decisions should be left to the professionals who work closest to these children and their parents.

Additionally, some districts have specific Alternative Education programs designed for children who have frequent violent episodes. These programs are staffed with specialists who are trained in behavior modification, de-escalation techniques and the proper use of restraints and seclusion. Time limits on seclusion and restraints may render these programs less effective. We could support a study into the implications of this bill on those programs and develop guidelines if necessary to enhance the effectiveness of such programs.

Thank you for your time.