Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 5th, 2015

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

We submit this testimony on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions who represent 200,000 working men and women from every city and town in our great state submit testimony as follows:

H.B. No. 6874 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING GRADUATE ASSISTANT BENEFITS

We support this legislation as it aims to require that the group insurance obtained by UCONN for its graduate assistants be procured through the state's Partnership Plan and give the Comptroller the formal authority/obligation to allow the university to purchase group insurance in that manner. PA 03-06 excluded graduate students from the state employee health plan. Since then benefits have eroded tremendously, cost to the graduate assistance is more expensive and there is less accessibility to providers. The current cost for a family is prohibitive and not sustainable on the average grad assistant's salary of $18,000 to $22,000 annually. This legislation also aims to waive all fees paid by the graduate assistants – these fees have risen so dramatically that the average GA pays 20% of his/her salary in student fees.

H.B. No. 6876 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

We support this legislation as it aims to protect workers by prohibiting the placement of provisions in collective bargaining agreements limiting the rights of employees to exercise their rights not only to arbitration but also allows the employee to pursue, through the court system, protections from discrimination.