AFT Connecticut
A Union of Professionals

Testimony of
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Planning and Development Committee
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HB 5886 AN ACT PROHIBITING MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES FROM SERVING ON CERTAIN MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES.

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Melodie Peters and I am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of union of nearly 29,000 public and private sector employees including state employees, nurses, healthcare workers, teachers and other school personnel.

I am submitting testimony in opposition of HB 5886 An Act Prohibiting Municipal Employees from Serving on Certain Municipal Legislative Bodies.

Our teachers, police officers, and firefighters have chosen a profession that is based upon a willingness to serve in their community and to help their fellow citizens, which through these professions gives them a direct insight into the lives of our community members. It is this direct interaction within our communities that should be fostered among our prospective municipal officials and not denied. The mandates set forth in HB 5886 would set forth a new precedent to restrict the voices of our community.

The long standing practice of recusing oneself from any action upon legislation that would be a conflict of interest with a public official is still the clear answer to address the kind of issues that HB 5886 sought to address. When we chose to deny representation to a group of people out of fear of a conflict of interest, we are denying the basic principles of democracy to these people.

The hidden side effect of legislation such as HB 5886 is that it will incentivize our public employees to move away from the municipality that they are working in and contributing to and incentivize them to move into the surrounding districts in order to avoid these restrictions. We know the kind of community building all of our municipalities gain when our citizens live, work and serve in elected office in their hometown.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this very important bill. I urge you to oppose HB 5886.