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**TESTIMONY OF ROBYN KAPLAN-CHO,
THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (CEA)**

**RAISED BILL 972
AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS
COMMITTEE CONCERNING SCHOOL
PARAPROFESSIONAL STAFFING**

**BEFORE THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND
INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 27, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. My name is Robyn Kaplan-Cho, and I work for the Connecticut Education Association where I advise our teacher members on issues related to special education.

The PRI study on school paraprofessionals staffing highlighted the valuable contribution that public school paraprofessionals make to our students across the state. It also raised important recommendations for changes that could be implemented to ensure that services provided by paraprofessionals are implemented appropriately and in a manner that will support the needs of both the students they serve and other staff with whom they work.

The bill before you, however, does not include three recommendations from the study that we believe are critical.

Recommendations #3 and #6 provide that the State Department of Education (SDE) should, through its focused monitoring efforts, randomly inspect IEPs to ensure that the language concerning paraprofessional services is written with the requisite specificity. This is necessary so that all of the parties to the IEP – staff, parents, and students – are clear as to how much time the paraprofessional will be spending with the student and what their support will include. Lack of specificity in IEPs is a widespread problem in the special education process, since it deprives all of those who must implement the IEP of the clear guidance that is necessary to ensure that the level of services provided is consistent with the intent of the planning and placement team’s decision. Recommendation #6 of the study would require the SDE to draft a policy brief that would lend such guidance and give examples of appropriately specific IEP language.

Recommendation #7 provides that the SDE should audit districts to determine if they are in compliance with requirements for substitute teacher qualifications and also determine if the number of substitutes is adequate to meet the districts’ needs. CEA supports such an audit, since it would shed light on how substitute teachers are being deployed and how often paraprofessionals are being utilized as substitute teachers instead of working with the specific students to whom they were assigned.

For these reasons, we ask that you amend Bill 972 to include recommendations #3, 6, and 7.

Thank you for your time and consideration.