

# State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Ed Leavy, President  
State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A  
**Public Hearing on Secondary Education**  
Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the committee:

I speak to you today not only as a representative of the almost 1200 educators in the Connecticut Technical School System, but as a proud teacher in the system. I taught for nearly a quarter-century at Bullard-Havens THS in Bridgeport. I worked with hundreds of young people for whom the idea of going directly from high school to college was unthinkable for many reasons. In our system, they were able to develop technical skills that allowed them to build middle-class lives. I recently toured Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, and I met a number of former students there. Many of them told me how they were the first members in their family ever to own their home. Some are taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement in their contract to return to state universities to move forward in their careers. I asked one former student who had been in automotive how he got a job working on helicopters. He said, "I spent four years in high school solving problems with a wrench in my hand. Where else can you get that? It put me in a different league from every other applicant."

The Governor's proposed budget harms the CTHSS both through the continuing budget reductions and through budgetary restructuring. The Governor's proposal moves funding for the CTHSS from a line item in the budget to the SDE. This policy contradicts the recommendations of the CTHSS Task Force, which was presented to the Education Committee in 2012. That task force recommended a change in governance structure, with the Superintendent reporting to a CTHSS Board that included the Commissioner of Education. Moving the CTHSS budget from its own line item to the SDE budget undermines the ability of the Superintendent and the CTHSS Board from making the decisions that they believe are in the best interests of the district, which is contrary to the conclusions of the Task Force. As with all recommendations that move line-item budgeting to block grants, it takes budgetary responsibility away from elected legislators and gives it to appointed managers. I ask you to reject the Governor's proposal to move the CTHSS back under the umbrella of the SDE budget. I believe this change will harm the CTHSS and the students we proudly educate.

Thank You.