



Advocating for teachers
and public education

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Testimony of

Kate Field and Ray Rossomando

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

Various Raised Bills

February 24, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, Research and Policy Specialist with the Connecticut Education Association. With me today is Dr. Kate Field, a recent school administrator who is now a Teacher Development Specialist also with CEA. CEA seeks to help the 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state have a greater voice in the decisions that affect students, classrooms, and the profession.

We are testifying today on three bills that share a common theme – they each are about educational challenges that can only truly be overcome if teachers have an opportunity to shape the policies that address them:

SB 174 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study Professional Development and In-Service Training Requirements for Educators

HB 5308 AAC a General Education Multitiered System of Instruction and Supports

SB 177 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study Declining Student Enrollment

SB 174 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study Professional Development and In-Service Training Requirements for Educators

CEA supports SB174 and the creation of a task force to study professional development and in-service training. We thank the committee for including representation from CEA on the task force. We also appreciate that you have included other teacher and administrator groups, such as the AFT-CT and CFSA. CEA would also support the expansion of the task force to include the Connecticut Association of School Administrators.

Over the years, what constitutes professional development, or professional learning as it is also called, has evolved quite a bit. Undertaking a comprehensive review of the professional development that is required of educators and required to be provided by school districts is long overdue. A task force that includes teachers will be well prepared to review practices and requirements and make recommendations that maximize teaching and learning.

HB 5308 AAC a General Education Multitiered System of Instruction and Supports

CEA supports the goals of HB5308 to improve the multi-tiered delivery of student instruction associated with Scientific Research Based Instruction or SRBI. However, CEA does not support HB5308 as written. As drafted, HB5308 does not include any representation from teachers and their representative organizations. Nor does it ensure that the perspectives of educators will drive the review, revision, and recommendation dialogue. This repeats a critical error in the development and implementation of SRBI evidenced numerous times in the past.

As you may know, SRBI is an approach to instruction driven by the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, which included a process called Response to Intervention (RTI). The SRBI Framework adopted in 2008 is largely based on the RTI model and represented a much different approach to providing interventions and support to struggling students than was typical in the past.

Prior to SRBI, most students who were struggling and required significant academic, behavioral, or emotional interventions received them outside the general education classroom, either through special education services and/or from educational support specialists. SRBI, however, broke with this traditional approach, shifting the focus to the general education classroom.

This shift required most teachers to make major changes in their practice, often without sufficient professional development or support. Since SRBI interventions must be based on scientific data, teachers need extensive time to meet with data teams, develop interventions, and familiarize themselves with different ways of monitoring each student's progress over time. Unfortunately many districts did not implement the structural changes to support these practices, which hindered the success of SRBI implementation.

Despite the enormity of the changes mandated by SRBI, teachers had very few opportunities to influence SRBI's design or its guidelines for implementation. At the state level, teachers' voices were largely excluded. SRBI's development in 2006, implementation in 2008, and follow-up task force in 2010 all were carried out with insufficient representation by teachers.

CEA urges members of this committee to include teachers, and their respective representative organizations, in the review and revision process of SRBI. CEA also suggests that the committee consider strategies that ensure educator input in the implementation of new guidelines in 2019.

SB 177 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study Declining Student Enrollment

CEA supports the concept of creating a task force to review the impact of declining student enrollment. But, such review would not be comprehensive or truly representative of the myriad issues to be addressed if it does not include groups, such as CEA and others that represent educators.

CEA urges the committee to include on the task force representation from exclusive bargaining agents for educators.

Thank you.