



Testimony of
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SB 383 An Act Concerning the Technical High School System

Education Committee Hearing
March 7, 2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the committee, my name is Ed Leavy and I am the President of the SVFT, which represents the 1,200 educators in the Connecticut Technical School System (CTHSS). We are proud of the job we do preparing our 13,000 students for the world of work or college. Our graduates build middle-class lives and provide a skilled workforce for Connecticut employers. This year, however, we too often have not kept the promise we have made to students and their families, because we have failed to provide certified teachers for our students. When positions have become vacant, the CTHSS has not been allowed to hire replacements. We have recommended candidates for positions, but the CTHSS cannot offer them the position. The CTHSS has not even posted vacancies since November. The result is that 42 teaching positions have substitutes. Forty two classrooms have no teachers, so students sit with substitutes, at best filling their time with busy work. We are told that not filling these positions is a cost savings. I acknowledge there are savings, but it is the students who are paying the cost.

Senate Bill 383 addresses this problem. It allows the superintendent to go directly to OPM to fill approved positions without having to go through the Department of Education. It gives the CTHSS superintendent the same latitude that superintendents throughout Connecticut have. In 2012, the Governor's Task Force on the CTHSS made several recommendations that gave the system the autonomy it needs to be successful. The results have been clear: enrollment is up, test scores are up, and the Strategic Plan has given us a clear path forward. The refusal to fill necessary positions and the Governor's proposal to return the CTHSS to the Department of Education budget, are a step backward for the system.

The suggestion that the bill move to a study group is not necessary; the 2012 Task Force has studied these issues before, and this bill is in line with their recommendations. Senate Bill 383 is an important step to continue the gains we have made. I want to thank the committee for bringing this bill forward, and I strongly urge everyone to support it.

Thank you.