

# State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Ed Leavy, President  
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**Proposed Bill #5591 – AN ACT CONCERNING PAY EQUITY IN THE WORKFORCE**  
Labor and Public Employees Public Hearing  
February 16, 2017

Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, and members of the committee:

I am Ed Leavy, President of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers representing the almost 1200 educators in the Connecticut Technical School System. I want to thank Speaker Aresimowicz and the other co-sponsors for introducing House Bill 5591. Yet it is with a mixture of incredulity and dismay that I am testifying on behalf of pay equity in the workforce. The general statutes should not have to be amended to guarantee that everyone who has similar experience and performs the same duties in the same workplace receives equal pay; our sense of fairness should make that obvious. Yet even today, when women have been a large part of the workforce for decades, women in America receive less than 80% of the pay men receive for the same work. Laws should not be necessary to correct this injustice, but laws clearly are required. House Bill 5591 is a positive step in that direction.

We cannot look at HB 5591 in isolation, however. Pay equity is not an issue when the workers are organized and work under a collectively bargained contract. Teachers working under an SVFT contract, for example, are differentiated only by accomplishment and experience, not gender or race. As this committee addresses several proposed bills that would greatly restrict or eliminate collective bargaining rights and our ability to organize, it is important to recognize such bills historically create more inequity between genders. The right to bargain collectively by definition creates equity for everyone involved. This bill is necessary because far too few workers have that guarantee.

My only concern for the bill is the current language does not allow for experience to be considered as a factor in differentiating pay. I remember my first year teaching English at Bullard-Havens in 1985. Though I was doing comparable work to the other teachers in my building, I lacked the experience to be a comparable employee, and my pay appropriately reflected that difference. As I gained experience I gained expertise, and my pay rose accordingly. This difference in pay is not the inequity that led to the drafting of the bill. Difference in experience must be excluded from the necessary and important effects of HB 5591

Thank You.