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*Testimony of the  
Connecticut Education Association  
Before the Education Committee  
March 16, 2017*

**HB 7253 AAC Minor Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes**

The Connecticut Education Association represents 43,000 active and retired teachers across the state and promotes their voices in decisions affecting students, teachers, and public education.

Given the breadth of topics addressed in this bill, CEA provides its position on the various sections as follows:

**Sec. 2 and 3** – CEA supports delaying the effective date for requiring that teachers meet new master degree requirements in order to obtain their professional certificate, provided the requirement applies prospectively to newly certified teachers. It should be noted that the State Board of Education adopted a policy making the statutory provision effective only to teachers certified on or after July 1, 2016. This change prevented teachers nearing completion of their master’s degree from having to take on additional unplanned credits. We ask the committee to take into consideration the SBE’s clarification and incorporate it into the statute.

**Sec. 10** – Section 10 would allow students training to become marital and family therapists to be employed in schools, and ultimately certified, as therapists. CEA opposes the extension of certification to individuals who have not successfully completed the requirements for licensure.

**Sec. 11** – CEA does not support this proposal. Section 11 would allow boards of education to bestow credits for experiences that are not overseen by certified teachers. This is inconsistent with provisions in 10-221a requiring graduation credits for certain individualized programs like online coursework and community service to be overseen by certified educators. It also conflicts with 10-16b, which requires the prescribed course of study to be “taught by legally qualified teachers.”

**Sec. 14** – CEA supports Section 14, which would clarify that parents of charter school students can seek resolution of complaints in the same manner that parents of children attending traditional public schools can. Last year, the State

Department of Education rejected a complaint about violations of law carried out by a chain of charter schools operated by a charter management organization. The rejection claimed that the statute that enables parents and other stakeholders to pursue complaints does not apply to charter schools. More recently, concerns about the actions of a charter school principal arose. The concerns were raised with the charter school's board, but ignored. Because of the Department of Education's newly stated position on CGS 10-4b, such complaints could not be brought to the State Board of Education. It was never the intent of the legislature to exclude charter schools from statutory provisions affecting local and regional boards of education, except with a waiver from certain provisions. Passage of this section would restore this intent.

**Sec. 15** – CEA does not support this section. At a time when school districts can most benefit from highly qualified administrators, we should not enable non-certified candidates to serve longer than already permitted.

Currently CGS 10-157 allows a local or regional board of education to appoint an acting superintendent who is not properly certified for a probationary period not to exceed one school year. Changes to this statute would extend the probationary period to two years, thereby allowing for an acting superintendent to remain non-certified for a longer period of time, provided the commissioner of education determines that the district has demonstrated a need or hardship that would warrant such an extension. Exactly how this determination would be made is unclear.

In the recent past, we've seen attempts to alter this section to allow non-certified acting superintendents to become fast-tracked into a superintendent's position. There appears to be no shortage of educators capable of meeting the preparatory and qualification requirements that all other superintendents in Connecticut have been able to meet. There appears to be no valid reason to create short-cuts to attract non-certified or out-of-state candidates. And if there is a dearth of properly certified Connecticut administrators prepared to accept a position as a superintendent, then the state should be working to provide incentives to increase the number of qualified graduates from Connecticut administrator certification programs. Diminishing the qualifications is not a suitable solution. We urge you to reject this section.