Testimony of
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Finance, Revenue & Bonding Public Hearing
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HB 5587: AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSION ON FISCAL STABILITY
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Good afternoon Senator Frantz, Senator Fonfara, Representative Rojas and members
of the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee. I am Jan Hochadel and am President
of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions
representing more than 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members
include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel, as
well as healthcare providers and public-sector workers. It is on their behalf that I am
here today to comment on HB 5587: AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMISSION ON
FISCAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

AFT Connecticut raised our concerns about the Commission’s report in previous
testimony, and I do not need to go into detail about our concerns again. I believe the
members were well-intentioned and well-meaning, but the lack of diversity in
experiences on the Commission provided too narrow a focus. Certainly, their call to
eliminate the estate and gift tax reflects life experiences far different from the people I
represent, as well as most working people in Connecticut, and their claim it is an
obstacle to Connecticut’s economic growth is dubious. Other ideas are worth
considering and debating, and we hope we continue to have public hearings, so the
voices of the people left off the Commission can be heard as well. We hope the public
hearing process continues to be followed should HB 5587 be adopted.

It is most important to us, however, that in the revised report the Commission stays
more closely aligned to their mission than it did in the initial version of the report. It has
been our position that the Commission went far afield of their mission when they made
recommendations on collective bargaining in their initial report. The language in this bill
speaks specifically to “joint standing committees of the General Assembly having
cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and state agency budgets, commerce,
revenue and bonding, and planning and development” having their chairs and ranking
members have ex officio standing on the commission. The Labor Committee is not
included in the language of the bill, nor are they participants in this hearing. A
Commission of under two dozen people, few if any have any experience with collective
bargaining, should not be packaging recommendations which would deny 40,000
people a voice in their healthcare and retirement as just one more recommendation in
their report. Allowing the Commission this latitude, without even hearing from the Labor
Committee, is an abrogation of responsibility by the elected officials of this state. We are willing to have further discussions with this Commission, and we are willing to have open and frank discussions about their recommendations when they are fully refined. We also believe that appointed people, no matter how well-intention they are or successful they have been in private business, should not have the final say over our democratically elected leaders. If this Commission is able to stay within its mission and are open to public, open conversations, then HB 5587 has the potential to be part of our conversations about how we move Connecticut forward; however, this bill cannot be further permission for them to overreach.

Thank you