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Testimony of
Ray Rossomando
Before the
Education Committee

Re:

HB 5217: AA ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO SCHOOL START TIMES

SB 314: AA CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

HB 5220: AA EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN AN EVEN START PROGRAM OR ENROLLED IN CERTAIN SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HB 5222: AA EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

HB 5379: AA CONCERNING THE ALLOCATION OF SLOTS FOR STATEFUNDED CHILD CARE CENTERS

HB 5213: AA CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODEL

HB 5380: AA CONCERNING SCHOOL LITERACY

HB 5215: AA CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

March 6, 2020

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. The Connecticut Education Association, which is an organization representing active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts across Connecticut, respectfully submits comments regarding various bills on the agenda today.

HB 5217: AA ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO STUDY ISSUES RELATING TO SCHOOL START TIMES

CEA supports the establishment of this working group and asks the committee to consider specifically including representatives of statewide teachers' unions. Unions such as the CEA can

enhance the work of the working group through research and communication with its members.

SB 314: AA CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Last fall, the Killingly High School community – parents, students, and teachers – decided to change their outdated mascot, which was offensive to Native Americans, to the Red Hawks. This change underscored the importance of recognizing how outdated decisions by one culture can be offensive, and even threatening, to another. Unfortunately, the local Board of Education voted to change the mascot back to the previous one that was offensive to Native Americans.

The Connecticut Education Association recognizes that the addition of Native American studies into the state’s required curricula acknowledges the contributions of Native Americans to our history and culture. We also recognize that education is critical to overcoming biases, bigotry, and hate that persist in American society.

According to the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers, our teachers are tasked with the responsibility to “nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.” We encourage everyone to support this code through education, inclusion, open-mindedness, and respectfulness to others.

American culture continues to suffer from vestiges of historic biases and blatant bigotry. CEA advocates for curricula to address these forces. Public education is a key ingredient to overcoming such forces and making our country stronger.

At the same time, state statute requires more than 24 specific topics and subtopics be taught. Increasing the number of topics legislatively each year is not a sustainable practice and represents a significant shift of curricular decisions from teachers, administrators, and locally elected boards of education to the legislature. CEA believes there is a better way and suggests that legislators call on teachers, administrators, and school communities to develop a model, culturally responsive, statewide curriculum for use by school districts. This could be a cost-effective way to promote more inclusive and responsive curricula in every district in the state.

HB 5220: AA EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM TO PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN AN EVEN START PROGRAM OR ENROLLED IN CERTAIN SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

HB 5222: AA EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY IN THE CARE4KIDS PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

HB 5379: AA CONCERNING THE ALLOCATION OF SLOTS FOR STATEFUNDED CHILD CARE CENTERS

CEA strongly supports the Education Committee’s proposals to strengthen the state’s various efforts to ensure dependable child care and promote child development.

HB 5213: AA CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A PILOT PROGRAM FOR AN EARLY CHILDHOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR MODEL

We support the pilot program and the potential to promote child development in the targeted districts. CEA, which has local affiliates in some of the piloted districts, looks forward to seeing how this work positively affects children and their preparedness for public school.

HB 5380: AA CONCERNING SCHOOL LITERACY

CEA supports the expansion of grades and focus on Alliance Districts proposed in this bill. Additionally, the collaboration with reading experts at UConn offers an innovative approach to promoting literacy.

HB 5215: AA CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

CEA supports legislation ensuring that climate change is included in the school curriculum from elementary school through high school.

Thank you.