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HB 6617 AAC Authorization of State Grant Commitments for School Building Project and Revisions to the School Building Projects Statutes

My name is Mary Yordon I live in Easton. I am a Divisional Vice President of AFT-CT, and President of the Norwalk Federation of Teachers. AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions, representing nearly 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses and other school personnel across the state. I am submitting testimony in support of HB 6617 AAC Authorization of State Grant Commitments for School Building Project and Revisions to the School Building Projects Statutes

Water bottle filling stations are required in this bill and we support this very practical provision. In many new schools we have been installing these with great results for both students and staff members. We have learned that the cheaper ones, or ones with a gooseneck-type filler spout don't work as well as the ones with interior pipes. Water bottle filling stations have a positive effect on the climate of the school building and over the course of time have a positive effect on the environment as a whole. These stations help to reduce single use plastic water bottles by both students and staff members. Refilling water bottle stations help to create a more pleasant environment to work and learn in.

We also very much support the need for school building committees. A multi-million dollar renovation as new had some surprising outcomes that could have been avoided with a school building committee to oversee construction and consider necessary changes and adjustments. For example, six teachers who previously had dedicated classroom space now travel from classroom to classroom and teach from carts. There are closets without electricity or power outlets that used to have this, and there are insufficient number of bathrooms in the building, as well as other outcomes that would normally have been communicated and considered by a building committee prior to the opening of the school building.

When we renovated to create the Norwalk Early Childhood Center, there was a very engaged school building construction committee. This committee contributed enormously to troubleshooting some challenging situations early in the process, including insufficient number of classroom spaces, the lack of lunchrooms or faculty workrooms and the alignment of schedules to properly serve student needs.

We are excited to see school projects throughout the state listed among the projects here, including my town of Norwalk and many other AFTCT local districts. Thank you for your support of these projects.