Testimony of
Brendan Murphy

Before the Education Committee

Re: HB 7353  AAC Various Issues Relating to Special Education

March 18, 2019

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Brendan Murphy, and I have been on staff with the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) representing teachers in Fairfield County for the last three plus years.

I am here today to support HB 7353, which protects teachers from reprisal in any form for expressing their professional opinion in a PPT or pre-PPT meeting. As a former special education teacher, I can attest to the pressure that is put on teachers to conform or go along with whatever the administration is proposing at a PPT meeting. Teachers need to be able to speak up and express their professional opinion as to what they feel is best for a specific student. Teachers need to not fear any reprisal because they express their professional opinion, even if their opinion is not popular with administration. The ability to speak freely about what is best for a student with special needs is imperative.

In one district that I worked in as a CEA staff member, a teacher disagreed with administration around what was best for a particular student. The teacher was non-tenured and subsequently told that she was going to be non-renewed (in other words, released without cause). The teacher had to resign and has since left teaching entirely because she spoke up and advocated for the needs of her students. This bill would help prevent things like that from happening in the future. Teachers should not fear that they might lose their jobs if they speak up and advocate for the needs of a special education student.

Often times, the biggest problem area in advocating for students with special needs is the associated cost. Teachers are told to not recommend certain placements, accommodations, or services that come with a high cost, even if, in the teacher’s professional opinion, it is what is best for the student. This should not be the case. Teachers should feel empowered to advocate for students’ needs and know that their advocacy will not be held against them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.