*Testimony of*

**Kate Dias**

**Connecticut Education Association**

*Before the*

**Committee on Children**

*Re:*

**SB 327 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF HATE SPEECH ON CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND ACHIEVEMENT**

March 5, 2024

Senator Maher, Representative Linehan, Representative Dauphinais, Senator Seminara, and esteemed members of the Committee on Children, my name is Kate Dias, and I am President of the Connecticut Education Association. CEA represents more than 40,000 active and retired teachers from over 150 school districts across the state.

CEA supports **SB 327 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study the Effects of Hate Speech on Children’s Health and Achievement.**

A storm of intolerance has been gathering in recent years. So much so that three years ago, the Unted Nations (UN) warned of the “exponential spread and proliferation of hate speech … amplified by technologies of communication” around the globe. This worrisome phenomenon is as evident globally as it is close to home.

CEA members witness hate speech at local board of education meetings, on playgrounds and little league fields, and increasingly in school communities. Educators see the impact on their students manifested in stress, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, self-harm, and unrealized potential. The gathering storm of intolerance led to a CEA Resolution at its 2020 Representative Assembly recognizing

“the danger of White supremacist groups and all media sources that promote hateful speech and actions, and the continuation of institutional racism. Further, the Association recognizes the danger of any group that marginalizes anyone based on race, color, national origin, political beliefs, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, size, marital status, or economic condition.”

CEA’s resolution on hate speech concludes that “educators should play a significant role in countering the effects of such speech, actions, and racism on our students, families, and communities.” Similarly, the UN identified the preventative role of education in countering hate speech by promoting inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance. What we, as lawmakers, educators, and communities, can do locally to counter hate, can positively impact us globally.

CEA welcomes a study on the effects of hate speech on children and achievement and suggests that it also addresses strategies for countering hate speech. We request a role on the task force to contribute to its work and to ensure that educators’ voices are part of the discussion.

We commend and thank committee members for taking on this issue.