



For Immediate Release
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Connecticut Educators Support New Efforts to Address At-Risk Students

Union leaders embrace Dalio Education's proposed holistic approach to resolve statewide learning crisis

Teachers, paraeducators, and school-related personnel across the state have joined efforts to draw greater attention to the need for more support for students disconnected from school or at risk of not graduating.

Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis: At-Risk & Disconnected Youth, a report commissioned by Dalio Education, details the need for more resources to address the statewide crisis that teachers, paraeducators, and school-related personnel have been dealing with for years. The foundation's leaders are scheduled to testify on Thursday before the legislature's Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC).

"We need to reshape the situation facing so many of our at-risk students, especially those who have had adverse experiences, and take direct actions that will improve outcomes for them," said CEA President Kate Dias.

"So many of our students have experienced isolation and trauma. They need help and support," said AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel. "There weren't enough mental health or social-emotional learning services—or the professionals to deliver them—before the pandemic. They remain in critically short supply now."

At its December 1 meeting, CEA's Board of Directors endorsed the Dalio report and issued the following statement: "The issue of disconnected youth is not new to Connecticut educators, who for years have been sounding the alarm about the additional resources needed to help them support, engage, and improve outcomes for these students. This report brings the issue to the forefront and highlights the critical importance of our public community schools, which take a multifaceted approach to dealing with the wide and diverse needs of our disconnected young people."

This past summer, the national AFT union launched its 'Real Solutions for Kids and Communities' effort, to grow partnerships with parents and other stakeholders. The campaign calls for a fresh, practical, detailed approach to strengthening public education.

"Dalio Education's new report reinforces our belief that we can accomplish more by working together with families, advocates, and elected officials than by acting alone," added Hochadel.

Dalio Education will share the report findings in testimony before members of the legislature's JJPOC. Included in those findings is the fact that 19% of Connecticut's youth ages 14-26 are

disconnected from education and employment systems or are at risk of becoming disconnected, which can lead to financial insecurity, homelessness, substance abuse, and incarceration.

Part of the problem, according to Dias and Hochadel, is the overreliance on standardized test scores when evaluating school districts. They instead urge an approach that rewards schools that meet the needs of at-risk students through internships, apprenticeships, and other career development opportunities.

“We need systemic change so that success includes all possible life paths for students, not just college,” stressed Dias. “We are hopeful that bringing attention to the issue and the need to involve education, business, and community-based organizations, all working together, will provide the additional support and effective programs educators need to help their students reconnect with education and the workforce so that they have successful, productive lives.”

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The Connecticut Education Association is Connecticut’s largest teachers’ union, representing active, retired, and aspiring educators across the state.

AFT Connecticut represents over 30,000 professionals across the state, including PreK-12 teachers, paraeducators and education support personnel in more than 30 local and regional school districts.

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