

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

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Education Committee

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HB 7344, AN ACT CONCERNING RECRUITMENT AND  
RETENTION OF TEACHERS

Good Afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischman. I am Yvonne Griffin retired educator from the Hartford Public Schools. I am here to testify in support of HB 7344.

During my teaching career, I was extremely active in the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) initiatives of:

- Minority Teacher Recruitment
- Minority Teacher Mentorship &
- Young Educator's Society (YES Clubs)

Because of these initiatives, we developed the now annual CT State Conference for Future Teachers. Our first conference in 1994 was entitled, "*Growing Our Own*".

While these initiatives are excellent and produced results, I felt an urgency to do more and knew that indeed more could be accomplished.

In 1998, I won the State's "National Christa McAuliffe Grant" and while attending their national conference heard about the Teacher Cadet Program. I researched it and paid to attend training sessions held in South Carolina.

Teacher Cadets is a program wherein students, who are juniors and seniors in high school and have expressed an interest in a career in education, take an education methodology course. They are granted academic, honors or advanced placement credit towards graduation as well as three education elective credits from the partner college/university.

In 1999, I asked CREC, each state university and the University of Hartford to partner with this course, which was to be offered at Hartford Public High School (HPHS). CREC & I were invited by Dr David Carter, then President of ECSU, to explain the partnership concept & responsibilities of the university. Today, ECSU's partnership with HPHS' Teacher Cadet Program is experiencing a huge success. When I retired in 2005, 16 students were in the course, nine of which were seniors. Of the nine, eight went on to a college with education as their intended major.

Additionally, CREC and ECSU have joined forces to develop the Summer Institute for Future Teachers, (SHIFT). Here students from across the state come together for three weeks in July, live on campus, take education courses, earning six education credits.

I am here today to stress the importance of funding of HB 7344. The need is so evident. Earlier today, you heard from Plainville HS students expressing the need for teachers of color in the suburban schools. I believe in what they are saying, however, as a former Hartford teacher (from 1971 – 2005), the reality is far too many Hartford students will graduate from high school never having had a teacher of color – just as their suburban peers.

Let me site just one quick example – when I can to HPHS in 1971 there were 18 teachers of color, when I retired there were 12.

Growing our Own is an extremely viable option. In South Carolina, the Teacher Cadet program was introduced in four high schools and one university in 1985; today it's in 155 high schools 10 universities. Imagine how our recruitment efforts would be improved if this program existed in just 50 of the high schools across the state. The eight that went on to major in education from my Teacher Cadet course, if multiplied by just 50 schools across the state, would have resulted in 400 students per year entering the field of education.

CT State Department of Education through then Commissioner Ted Sergi and the Greater New England Alliance of Black School Educators (GNEABSE) funded the training of six teachers New Haven, East Hartford, New Britain, Hartford, Waterbury, Manchester & two professors U of Hartford & Central CT State Univ. However, without legislative support, the program has not been replicated in the state and may not continue at HPHS.

Since CREC has a long and outstanding track record, I would suggest that CREC serve as the funding conduit. For, they are already deeply involved in teacher recruitment and retention, and have the experience and the desire to function as a mentor, trainer and resource provider.