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HB 7344 AN ACT CONCERNING RECRUITMENT AND  
RETENTION OF TEACHERS

HB 6754 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT  
OF MINORITY TEACHERS

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the committee:

I am Denise Lee-Holter, CREC representative and Chair of the Regional Educational Service Center Alliance Minority Teacher Recruiting Program, better known as the RESC MTR Program, which is a representative group from each of Connecticut's RESCs.

I am here today with my colleagues, Esther Bobowick of CES, Laurene Pesce of Education Connection and Kevin Walton from ACES, representing participating local school districts in their request that members of the General Assembly reinstate funding for the Minority Teacher Recruiting Program.

As you are aware, the shortage of qualified minority teachers is one of the most challenging issues facing urban, suburban and rural school districts. The only way to solve the problem long-term is to convince our own minority students, paraprofessionals and other

career changers to pursue teaching as a career through programs that provide college scholarships to minority students.

The key to increasing the number of teachers of color is dependent upon sufficient funding, supportive staff in programs at the local and state level, as well as state minority teacher recruiting policies that recognize diversity as an asset and not a “feel good” add on.

We are proposing the establishment of a seamless pathway to teaching program building upon existing programs. Primary objectives include the development of a comprehensive mentoring and support program targeting paraprofessionals, career changers and high school and college students.

There is a need for imaginative programs developed through private and public resources to attract minority students to careers in education. One such program is the TSTT (Today’s Students Tomorrow’s Teachers) program.

Any lasting effort to improve the representation of minorities in the teaching ranks must address the social and societal dynamics confronting minority and disadvantaged youth. Effective MTR programs must address culturally unique socialization processes related to learning styles in order to improve outcomes.

Recommendations for developing minority teachers are detailed in the RESC MTR Alliance Symposium Report and Fact Sheet included in your packet.

The following are examples of successful minority teacher recruiting and development initiatives that the state should fund and pursue

1. state scholarship program
2. programs targeting students who might be under challenged in order to prepare them to qualify for scholarships
3. targeted high school and college work-study programs
4. a program stressing the need for better articulation between two-year and four-year institutions
5. assistantships and grant program
6. loan repayment incentive programs
7. support programs for paraprofessionals and other career changers
8. support programs for minorities accepting teaching jobs in ethnically diverse communities

The responsibility for establishing a diverse teacher workforce in Connecticut belongs to all of us involved in education. It is a goal we should make a priority. However, it will not happen until all the decision makers in education talk about “our students” rather than “those students,” when referring to minority students.

It time for the Connecticut Legislature to fulfill its commitment to the success and well-being of all students by providing both moral and financial support for the Minority Teacher Recruiting Program. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative and appreciate your consideration of this request.