



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

Higher Ed

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1405, 1410
7344, 7353

Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education
Before the Education Committee
12:30 p.m. – LOB-1E
March 12, 2007

Raised H.B. 7344, An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

With regard to HB 7344, the Department administers a very successful vehicle for attracting minority students into the teaching profession through its Minority Teacher Incentive Program. Launched in 1999, the program targets 50 new minority juniors or seniors each year, as funding permits. Students are eligible for grants of up to \$5,000 per year for the last two years of their teacher preparation program. Additionally, students who then teach in a Connecticut public elementary, middle, or high school are eligible for loan reimbursement grants for up to four years of \$2,500 per year. Potentially, each qualified student and subsequent teacher may earn up to \$20,000 from the program in total. Grants also are available to minority students who have graduated and subsequently enroll in our Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program.

Since its inception, the Minority Teacher Incentive Program has awarded close to \$2.8 million in grants and \$923,165 in loan reimbursements to 360 potential teachers of whom 67 percent (242) carried loans, 23 percent (82) were transfers from community colleges and 35 percent (127) were eligible for stipends and have become teachers in Connecticut public schools (more program participants are likely to be active teachers, but those without loans are not tracked at this time). Since 1992, 92 minority teacher candidates have received grants through the ARC program.

If the intent of the bill is to provide additional opportunities for minority students to become teachers after they have graduated from college, we believe this could be accommodated with additional funding to this program.

Raised H.B. 7353 An Act Concerning An Alternate Route to Certification Program for Administrators

We are looking across the country currently for the best model alternate route programs that could help us meet Connecticut's commitment to strengthen school leadership by focusing on "turn-around administrators" for school systems that lag in student achievement. We would be happy to work with appropriate colleagues across the state on that effort and to determine the best framework for such a pilot program in Connecticut.

Raised S.B. 1405, An Act Concerning Intervention Model for Schools in Need of Improvement and Concerning Urban Education

Regarding RB 1405, we suggest that under Section 2(h), to maximize the potential for K-12 students to attend or access courses at colleges, you change the wording to permit grant funds to support not just advanced placement courses but also dual credit courses, which could be either those on ground or those offered on-line.

The Department welcomes and encourages more opportunities for our colleges and universities to collaborate with our PreK-12 partners. As you may know, joining with elementary and secondary schools to improve teaching and learning at all levels is one of our system's primary statutory goals and one on which we report progress annually through our accountability report, *Higher Education Counts*. In this report, you will find tangible evidence of the multiple collaborative activities and programs supported by the University of Connecticut, Connecticut State University, and the Community-Technical Colleges. But we concur that more needs to be done by all of our colleges to make sure that students from all socio-economic backgrounds are better prepared to succeed in college and in the global economy.

Finally, the Teach-One grant program concept is exciting. As the department staffing Connecticut's National and Community Service Commission, we are well aware of how effective our Americore programs are in the area of mentoring and tutoring. We would be pleased to work on development of such a concept with our college and university partners, however, grant programs of this kind only work with funding.

Raised S.B. Bill 1410, An Act Concerning High School Curriculum and Graduation Requirements Reform

It is encouraging to see that the Governor, the Legislature, the business community, and the education community have all come together in thinking about the commitment to enhance high school graduation requirements in Connecticut. The Department of Higher Education has been working with representatives of Connecticut's public and independent colleges and universities to help develop a rigorous high school curriculum because we believe it will prepare students much more fully to graduate from high school with the skills necessary to enter post-secondary education or find appropriate employment in the workforce of the twenty-first century. We share and encourage the strong expectation that more rigorous educational expectations will be the norm for admission into our four-year institutions. We also note the deleterious effect of insufficient math instruction, particularly, on student retention.

As a state, and as concerned parents and citizens, we must continue our commitment to the importance of challenging curriculums, educational requirements, and academic expectations throughout the educational spectrum, from K-16 and beyond. We all have a stake in that process, because higher quality students and higher quality graduates mean higher skills and higher quality contributions to the state's workforce and to our future economic development and stability -- in our cities and urban centers particularly. We must prepare all of our students to participate, on equal footing, in an economy that is increasingly global, and we must be able to have our students compete with students from throughout the world, many of whom are already better prepared than our students are in critical fields, particularly in the sciences, technology, and mathematics.