

Testin Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: DR. DOUGLAS
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Education C Date: 3-12-07 Bill Number: 7344

March 12, 2007

HB 7344, AN ACT CONCERNING RECRUITMENT
AND
RETENTION OF TEACHERS

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative
Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Dr. Bruce Douglas. I serve as chair of the
Regional Education Service Center Alliance, an
organization that represents all of the school districts in
the State of Connecticut.

I am here to testify in support of House Bill 7344, an act
concerning recruitment and retention of teachers, and to
speak briefly about some of the other initiatives under
consideration by your committee.

I strongly believe that the legislature needs to fund and
support any initiatives that will boost the number of
people of color serving as teachers in our state. We need
to create more incentives and provide greater access to
young people and career changers who want to join the
field of education. As we all know, good teachers, role
models and leaders come in all shapes, sizes and colors.

Your committee is also considering a number of proposals that I believe will improve the course and quality of our educational system.

I urge the legislature to support efforts to increase the access to pre-school and early childhood programs. As we all know, this is a worthy endeavor. We cannot break the cycle of poverty until we give our children the educational foundation they need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow.

I also ask you to give the State Department of Education all the programmatic and staffing resources it needs. The Department of Education has experienced limitations on its growth while attempting to close the achievement gap, meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and provide support and guidance to our schools.

As the state expands early childhood programs and increases the educational expectations of these programs, we will adequate staffing to ensure that there is proper oversight and support. The Department of Education already has a statutory charge to oversee the education of all our children. Therefore, I think it is appropriate that their responsibility for early childhood programs is clarified, and that education officials be given the resources required to meet their obligations.

I also believe that giving the Department of Education proper staffing levels will save local districts money. If municipalities have access to state consultants and

resources, they will not need to expand their own capacity.

This is a remarkable time in our state's history. Our Governor and legislature agree that we can do better by our most vulnerable citizens, our children. Now, we have the opportunity to demonstrate courage and educational leadership.

If the legislature adopts of the Governor's conceptual budget, measures that support the development, recruitment and retention of minority teachers and a number of other proposals under consideration, you will put us in the forefront of the national, and hopefully international, educational community – which is where Connecticut, one of the wealthiest regions in the world, belongs.

Thank you.