

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Education Committee
March 16, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

ON

RAISED BILL 6654

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RESIDENT TEACHER CERTIFICATE

The Department of Education supports the intent of Raised Bill 6654 which seeks to establish a resident teacher certificate for those teachers enrolled in an alternate route to certification program. The bill also seeks to expand the districts in which graduates of a national corps of teachers' training program, such as the Teach for America program, may be employed to include all priority school districts in the state.

As you well know, Connecticut's achievement gap is one of the worst in the country. In addition, some of Connecticut's struggling school districts have a great deal of difficulty filling teacher vacancies. Since 2006, the Teach for America program has provided a pool of intelligent and enthusiastic new teachers to schools in Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven. Teach for America participants go through a rigorous selection process where less than 15% of applicants are accepted into the program. Certainly, priority school districts in

Connecticut could benefit from becoming eligible to employ Teach for America teachers.

However, the Department does have a few concerns pertaining to the requirements for the resident teacher certificate and who may request an extension of the certificate. We are happy to work with the Committee to address these concerns and overall, the Department supports Raised Bill 6654 and urges its passage.