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Testimony
Connecticut General Assembly
Education Committee

H.B. No. 6666, "AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION."

- 1) Addresses the shortage of math, science and world language teachers in our state by removing an arbitrary barrier in the teacher certification process. Currently, Connecticut law prevents excellent candidates from teaching simply because they do not have a college major in a given subject area—regardless of their mastery of the material in that field. At no additional cost to the state this bill will allow prospective teachers in shortage area fields who achieve an excellent score on a subject area exam such as Praxis II (which is already administered by the state as part of the existing certification process) to bypass college credit requirements.**
 - Some districts cannot find enough qualified teachers in areas like math, science and world languages to fill their slots. Bridgeport, for example, has to recruit math and science teachers from India and many children in the state are taught by long-term substitute teachers.
 - Of the 118 accepted Teach For America candidates interested in teaching secondary math in Connecticut this year, only 13 percent qualified under current requirements.
 - If this bill is passed Connecticut would be joining sixteen other states, including Massachusetts and New Jersey, which allow subject knowledge tests in lieu of college coursework, which satisfies the No Child Left Behind "highly-qualified" teacher standard.

- 2) Expands Connecticut's ability to attract top teaching talent from other states by creating a provision allowing certified teachers with a successful record of teaching experience in other states to have their certification recognized in Connecticut without having to retake basic competency and subject area knowledge tests (e.g. Praxis I and Praxis II)**

- Connecticut is one of the smallest states in the country in terms of population and we're surrounded by other states that could be pipelines for teaching talent in our schools.
- Those states – including Massachusetts and New York – have set up systems to accept Connecticut teacher certification, allowing them easy access to recruit teachers out of Connecticut.
- Connecticut does not have the same interstate reciprocity, so a certified teacher from another state who wants to move here has to start from square one in Connecticut's certification process.
- Interstate reciprocity would help with recruitment of teachers of color by allowing Connecticut to tap into the New York talent pool.

3) Requires scientifically-based reading instruction as part of elementary teachers' professional development requirements.

- We should make sure that what we're asking teachers to know is aligned with best practices based on solid research about reading instruction—particularly because the reading scores of Connecticut students in the early grades have been slipping in recent years.
- To help address this issue, last year the state created a requirement for new early childhood and elementary school teachers to ensure that they were exposed to the most recent knowledge of evidence-based practices of reading instruction. This bill takes advantage of the established continuing education system for teachers to ensure that existing elementary school teachers also have a mechanism through which to learn the latest techniques for evidence-based reading instruction.
- This bill would require that at least 15 of the 90 continuing education credit hours required for early childhood and elementary school teachers be focused on evidence-based best practices in reading instruction.

4) Removes barriers to getting experienced artists into arts-themed inter-district magnet schools on a part-time basis.

- There is a talent pool of artists and musicians all over the state who could be huge assets to students in arts-themed inter-district magnet schools.
- This bill does not seek to replace existing full time art and music teachers—rather it seeks to create a supplementary certification pathway so that practicing artists can also work part-time as teachers.
- To be eligible for this alternate certification status, these part-time teachers must have a bachelor's degree and at least three years of work experience or one year of work experience and two years of specialized artistic schooling in their field.
- In a story on WNPR, Roy Wiseman, a 20-year veteran at New Haven's Educational Center for the Arts, a part-time magnet school, who plays double bass and leads ensembles as well as conducting Wesleyan University's orchestra said he would leave the school if he had to become certified traditionally.

H.B. No. 6654, "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RESIDENT TEACHER CERTIFICATE"

Connecticut has the largest gap between poor and wealthy students of any state in the country and our urban districts struggle to recruit high-quality teachers to their highest need subject areas.

- Internationally, Connecticut's achievement ranks far below world leaders. In a matchup of Connecticut's 2007 National Assessment of Education Progress and the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, half as many Connecticut students were proficient in math as Singaporean students. Our poor and Hispanic students score below Moldova, and our African-American students tie with Jordan and score less than half as high as Bulgaria.
- Connecticut's achievement gap between poor and non-poor students is the largest achievement gap of any state in the country. The achievement gap is most acute in high school: the gap in percentage of students at grade level is 44 points between our African-American and white high school sophomores.
- Bridgeport, for example, has to recruit math and science teachers from India and too many children in our state's neediest districts are taught by long-term substitute teachers with no subject area expertise.

Without the successful passage of proposed changes to state legislation (the Resident Teacher Certificate), Connecticut could potentially lose talented and dedicated teachers who want to

teach in our state through highly selective alternative routes to certification that support the continuation of certification and training throughout a teacher's first year in the classroom.

- New York, for example, offers a transitional license that allows teachers who have completed an orientation program and passed two state tests to complete their training over the course of three years.
- Connecticut competes with states like New York for talented teachers, and if we don't establish a resident teacher certificate, we will continue losing talented and dedicated teachers.
 - Many Teach For America teachers who want to teach in Connecticut are turned away and placed in other regions because of the state's existing certification timeline and requirements.

We need to do everything we can to attract talented people to the teaching profession who are dedicated to raising student achievement; we need to build pipelines that bring talent into our urban schools and ConnCAN believes one of the best ways to do that is through Teach For America.

- Teach For America is the national corps of top recent college graduates who commit to teach for at least two years in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity.
- Launched in Connecticut in 2006, Teach For America is now a force of 150 corps members, teaching across four high-need, urban districts in the state and they are impacting more than 9,000 students from low-income communities in the state.
- Research supports Teach For America's effectiveness:
 - A recent study of Louisiana's teacher education programs finds that participants in the Louisiana Practitioner Teacher Program – most of whom are Teach For America teachers – have a positive impact on their students' achievement in mathematics, reading and language arts, even more so relative to teachers coming in through different pathways. This model of the Practitioner Teacher Program is similar in timeline and structure to the Resident Teacher Proposal in Connecticut today.
 - A 2008 Urban Institute study found that high school students taught by Teach For America teachers excelled compared to their peers. In fact, the study found that the effect on student achievement of having a TFA teacher was three times that of other new and even veteran teachers in the same school.
 - A 2004 Mathematica Policy Research study found that students of Teach For America teachers make more progress in a year in both reading and math than would typically be expected.
 - And a 2007 survey by Policy Studies Associates, found that 96 percent of principals reported they are satisfied with the Teach For America teachers in their schools.