

Key Points about Teach For America – Connecticut and House Bill #6654 (An Act Establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate)

The problem of educational inequity:

- Nine-year-olds growing up in low-income communities in this country are already three grade levels behind their peers in high-income communities.
- Only 1 in 10 students growing up in low-income families are graduating from college.
- According to the Nation's Report Card, Connecticut has the largest achievement gap (degree of educational inequality) in the country - between children who are poor vs. non-poor, black vs. white, Hispanic vs. white.

Teach For America is part of the solution:

- Teach For America exists to address educational inequity— to give all young people access to a quality education. Teach For America attracts high achieving recent college graduates of all majors to commit at least two years to teach in urban and rural public schools, where they work relentlessly to significantly improve the academic achievement of their students. Many of these top college graduates had never considered teaching as a career before joining this organization.
- Since its origin in 1990, Teach For America teachers have educated approximately 3 million students. This year, 6,200 corps members are teaching in over 1,600 schools in 29 regions across the country.
- Admission to Teach For America is highly selective, with less than 15-20% of applicants getting accepted to the program on an annual basis.
- Teach For America alumni become leaders in fields both inside and outside of education. Our 14,000 alumni draw on their experience in the classroom as a powerful motivator to help eliminate educational inequity in America.
 - According to Teach For America's latest alumni survey, more than two-thirds of the 14,000 alumni of Teach For America are currently working or studying full-time in the field of education, and nearly one-third remain as classroom teachers.
 - Over 400 alumni are serving as school leaders, many of them leading some of America's highest performing inner-city public schools. For example, 80% of Achievement First principals are Teach For America alumni and the founders of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) are alumni as well.
 - Over 200 Teach For America alumni work on Capitol Hill, in government or in advocacy.
 - In Washington, D.C., Michelle Rhee (Teach For America alumna '92) became head of DC Public schools, one of the youngest chancellors in the city's history.
- The Connecticut region of Teach For America was launched in 2006 is now a corps of 150 teachers across four high-need, urban districts in the state. They are impacting more than 9,000 students from low-income communities in Connecticut. Among Teach For America – Connecticut's first cohort of alumni, 90% are continuing to work in education and 75% are continuing to teach beyond their two-year commitment to the corps.

Teach For America teachers are having a significant and positive impact on student achievement in the classroom.

- 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 Certificate proposal in Connecticut today.
 - A longitudinal Urban Institute study released in 2008 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 is typical in their schools. In math, Teach For America teachers significantly outperformed even veteran and traditionally certified teachers. The impact of having a Teach For America teacher in a math class as compared to another beginning teacher was greater than the effect of reducing the class size by eight students
 - Another study conducted by the Urban Institute in New York City showed that dramatic gains in math and language arts made by students in the city's poorest schools from 2000 to 2005 was largely attributable to the city's aggressive effort to improve the quality of teachers during that time. Specifically, 40 percent of all new teachers hired were Teach For America corps members or New York Teaching Fellows candidates.
 - 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.
 - 95 percent rated Teach For America teachers as effective as other beginning teachers in terms of performance and student achievement; and
 - 93 percent of principals found Teach For America teachers' training at least as good as other beginning teachers.

Without the successful passage of proposed changes to state legislation (Bill #6654 establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate), Connecticut could lose Teach For America.

The problem is that there is no existing certificate in Connecticut that parallels the timeline of Teach For America's training model.

- Teach For America teachers in Connecticut are recruited, trained and supported through intense and proven model that includes a rigorous summer training program before they enter the classroom, and extends developmentally-appropriate training over the course of the first two years of teaching.

- To date in Connecticut, Teach For America has been required to front-load certification requirements into the summer training program in order to meet existing requirements, which diminishes the value of Teach For America's training model in the state.
- The solution is for the DOE to establish a one-year resident teacher certificate for alternatively-certified teachers who are enrolled in programs like Teach For America - programs that bridge the training that happens before and after teachers enter the classroom, programs that provide intense ongoing support for new teachers once they have started teaching.
- The Resident Teacher Certificate will allow alternatively-certified teachers in successful, proven programs like Teach For America in Connecticut to take certification classes during nights, weekends, and over the summer, just like other states allow.

The Connecticut legislature has the opportunity to lead the way in supporting innovative education programs like Teach For America and creating an environment for them to thrive in Connecticut.

- Supporting the Resident Teacher Certificate Bill will help remove Connecticut's roadblocks to teacher quality.
- Teach For America is a sound investment for recruiting high-quality teachers in Connecticut - even in these tough economic times.
 - Teach For America is funded through a wide variety of public and private partnerships that fund its ability to recruit, train and support its teachers, as well as foster its alumni who are leading districts, schools, businesses and non-profits nationwide.
 - Charity Navigator, which rates over 5,400 nonprofits for their fundraising efficiency and impact, has consistently given Teach For America its highest rating because of their low overhead to operations ratio and sound financial oversight.
 - And because the Mathematica study concluded that the impact of having a Teach For America teacher in math was higher than the impact of reducing class size by 8 students - think about cost allocation in that context - Teach For America is a good return on investment in the short term, and an even greater return in the long run, since two-thirds of their alumni are still in education and many of them are driving significant reform efforts.

