



Testimony by  
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Before the Education Committee  
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Good afternoon, Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut State University System (CSUS) with regard to Senate Bill 939, *An Act Concerning Educator Certification*, House Bill 6654, *An Act Establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate* and House Bill 6666, *An Act Concerning Teacher Certification*.

**Senate Bill 939, *An Act Concerning Educator Certification*.**

We applaud the Department's continued work over many years to revise teacher certification regulations and appreciate their efforts to keep the Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) informed as the process moves along. However, it is difficult to fully analyze the impact of Senate Bill 939 because it makes numerous references to the proposed teacher certification regulations which have yet to go through the necessary approval process (State Board of Education and Legislative Regulations Review).

In fact, although we have heard a number of presentations regarding certification changes from the State Department of Education for several months, to date, we have not received a draft of the proposed regulations. Because the documents are still evolving, we are in the difficult position of being asked to revise our teacher preparation programs to meet a moving target.

However, we remain strong supporters of revising teacher training programs to become competency based. We also recognize the interest in shifting professional development for current teachers from CEU's based on seat-time to professional development activities emphasizing student learning and analysis of student achievement data.

There are sections of this proposed legislation which take effect after July 1, 2014 that assume that the current proposed regulations will be adopted on the current schedule and in their current form, which remain less than clear at the present time. There are two main issues of concern with this legislation as it is presently drafted:

First, in our view it would not be advisable for the Connecticut State University System to make the necessary programmatic changes before the regulations are approved. We have been down this road before. Several of our Universities made changes on the basis of proposed regulations several years ago, only to have to retool again when those anticipated regulations were not adopted. Given the strain on our financial resources, it simply would not make sense to undertake the work necessary now to revise programs and faculty without certainty that we would be acting consistent with regulations that will ultimately be adopted.

The second issue relates to the date of implementation. Because we do not have approved regulations from which to work, we cannot commit to designing and implementing new

programs on a rigid timeline. We understand that the SDE is contemplating issuing the current certificate for two years (July 1, 2014 to July 1, 2016) to individuals who have been enrolled in teacher preparation programs for 4 years and who are unable to complete the requirements in that time. We appreciate the SDE's responsiveness and willingness to address this issue.

We would also offer another proposed solution to this dilemma. The Universities would be willing to commit to making the necessary programmatic changes to meet the new regulations, effective with the class entering two years after the regulations are approved. This solution meets the administrative need for designing and implementing necessary program changes and does not put students in the untenable situation of being caught between two sets of requirements after beginning a program of study.

If this bill passes and the changes become effective on July 1, 2014, there are students enrolled in our teacher preparation programs today that would be negatively impacted because it takes many students more than 4 years to graduate.

In addition, there are a number of other issues we would like to address:

1. The effect of the changes in Section 2(h) is to recast teacher preparation programs to address competencies. While there is general agreement in principal on this, the proposed legislation does not identify competencies and allows only for the State Board of Education to approve competency areas contained in the professional teaching standards. This proposal does not require that the competencies be approved through the legislative process and assumes that SDE will incorporate input from the IHEs and others. While we have no reason to believe that the Commissioner would not include the IHEs in such discussions, we would ask that you consider language that would have SDE work with the IHEs to define the necessary competencies.
2. Section 3 of the bill expands the types of entities permitted to offer alternate routes to certification programs and I would suggest that students who graduate from these programs be held to the same standards as those students who graduate from IHEs. Our teacher preparation programs will gladly collaborate with other teacher training entities on this effort.

***House Bill 6654, An Act Establishing a Resident Teacher Certificate and House Bill 6666, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification.***

While the Connecticut State University System graduates two of every three teachers in Connecticut's K-12 system, we recognize that significant shortages still exist in many of these districts. This is especially true in the State's priority school districts – where the achievement gap is most evident – and in particular subject areas. We support the intent of both House Bill 6654 and House Bill 6666 to help address the high demands for teachers in shortage areas, and would be pleased to work with members of the Committee to address a number of issues to ensure that these candidates meet all the standards and necessary requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.