

**Testimony of Margie B. Gillis, Director, Haskins Literacy Initiative,
in support of Proposed Bill No. 939, An Act Concerning Educator Certification**

March 16, 2009

I write this testimony in support of PB No. 939, An Act Concerning Educator Certification. In addition to including explicit language to establish more rigorous teacher preparation programs, a focus on competency-based completion standards instead of course-based standards will ensure accountability for learning content that aligns with Connecticut State Standards.

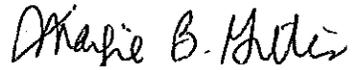
The proposed bill contains specific language for the monitoring and accountability of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). All practicing teachers in the state of Connecticut are required to take 90 hours of coursework over a period of five years in order to maintain certification as an educator or to become recertified. The regulations that govern the administration of CEUs and the activities of CEU providers have not been explicit enough or enforced to ensure that teachers are learning content that will have an impact on student achievement. Likewise, the efficacy of the system has not been evaluated or monitored to ensure that the content provided in these CEU courses includes clear objectives and that educators demonstrate proficiency in the content area through an appropriate assessment.

Since CEUs are the currency of the practicing teacher's professional development experience, it is imperative that the State Board of Education, along with Local Education Agencies, work collaboratively to ensure that teachers are provided with the highest quality opportunities to expand their knowledge of evidence-based practices and content. If student outcomes do not show improvement with the current CEU offerings, the State board of Education may increase the 90 hour requirement to as many as 150 hours. While a quantitative increase in the number of hours may be helpful, the additional hours must include professional development activities matched to students' needs and based on what teachers are lacking in terms of knowledge and skills. There must be assurances that teachers are receiving quality training that will enhance their teaching in order to increase student achievement.

I applaud the Education Committee and the State Department of Education for working together to ensure that certification and recertification regulations are stringent, data-driven, and

accountability-based. The children of Connecticut deserve the highest quality education, a goal that will not be achieved until and unless all teachers are highly-trained and skilled professionals.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margie B. Gillis".

Margie Gillis, Director
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