



Education Committee

Testimony prepared by Dr. Alice Pritchard

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Good afternoon. My name is Alice Pritchard and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives.

I urge your support of RB 275 *An Act Concerning Staff Qualifications for School Readiness Programs for 2015*. Raised Bill 275 sets a standard which will result in raising the qualifications and competencies of early childhood teachers in state funded preschool programs by requiring teachers in these programs to have a college degree by 2015 AND will allow us to require that these individuals meet a competency-based standard set by a committee of Connecticut early childhood educators (Standards Committee) and based on the published standards of the national early childhood professional organization (NAEYC).

By 2015 these teachers must hold an associate's or a bachelor's degree from an approved competency-based higher education program. A minimum of 50% of teachers in each program must have a bachelor's and the remaining teachers must have an associate's degree (50/50 requirement). Individuals graduating from these approved programs would also earn an Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) as documentation of meeting this competency-based standard.

In addition, evidence suggests that the standard set in PA 05-245 is unachievable. Public Act 05-245 requires School Readiness teachers to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree by 2015. Currently less than a third of these teachers hold a bachelor's degree.

In 2009 the Department of Higher Education conducted an analysis and determined that it would not be possible to meet the bachelor's by 2015 standard either by raising the qualifications of the current workforce or by preparing new bachelor's level early childhood teachers, or a combination of the two. The time required for students to complete bachelor's degrees makes the 2015 goal unattainable.

Raised Bill 275 will allow the state to set a high standard based on competencies by 2015. By holding higher education institutions accountable to a competency-based standard we can ensure that graduates of both associates and bachelor's degree programs have the competencies required to teach young children.

In addition, the 50/50 requirement (a minimum of 50% of teachers with bachelor's and all others with associates degrees) is the standard that has been set by the federal government for Head Start (by 2013) and by the professional organization (National Association for the Education of Young Children) for accreditation of programs for young children (by 2015).

There is a growing body of research on the competencies teachers need to be effective in early childhood classrooms (i.e., Pianta and Howes, 2009) and college degrees alone do not ensure that individuals have these competencies.

For these reasons, we urge your support of Raised Bill 275.