



Testimony for the Education Committee from

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I am presently interim dean of the Isabelle Farrington College of Education at Sacred Heart University, past president of the AACTE CT, member of the p-20 task force on educator effectiveness, member of the PEAC group, and member of the Ct advisory Council for teacher professional standards. As such, I have participated in most recent efforts to improve the k-12 continuum through attention to pre-service training, regulation reform, and professional development.

The Governor's Bill 24: AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS proposes dramatic and necessary first steps toward creating a learning environment in CT in which all of our children can thrive.

I applaud the direction of the governor's plan to address student achievement through coordinated programs that identify and redirect needed resources to districts.

I also applaud the intention to redefine the incentives systems so that high performing educators will be able to achieve recognition and reward for commitment of their talent in venues most in need.

In particular I wish to applaud the disposition to align career path opportunities with continuous achievement and improvement.

In my role as leader of one of the major teacher preparation programs in CT, I wish to remark here on the multiple ways in which I believe higher education can and should be able to collaboratively participate in the planning and implementation of this complex system:

- 1) Regarding performance assessment.— **need realistic expectation of development time and resources required**
 - a. Reliable, valid, and fair processes / instruments for assessing educator performance is one foundational element for the new system
 - b. The performance evaluation system will be used to identify deficiency of performance. As the consequences of such identification increases (e. g. loss of

status, missed opportunity for career advance, or compensation related activities) we assume an increasing responsibility to assure the good psychometric properties for the process.

- c. The expectation is frequently expressed in the text of the bill that performance assessment will direct advancement opportunity, guide professional development, and inform the development of more focused graduate education programs.
 - i. This is a long needed effort to facilitate meaningful professional growth and to provide essential knowledge and skill sets in our classrooms.
 - ii. However, this also requires that the assessment systems be appropriately and fairly diagnostic.
 - d. The Higher Education community has faculty resources that should appropriately be drawn on to work with other experts and stakeholders in our state to refine, manage and continually improve this assessment system.
 - e. Unless this aspect (development of fair and effective assessment) is sufficiently resourced, the intended good application cannot hope to succeed.
- 2) Regarding Professional development. – **the new system requires much greater integration of effort among stakeholders**
- a. Talented recruits, effective preservice preparation, meaningful and continuous professional development are all essential to improving educator effectiveness.
 - b. The present bill begins to address some of these issues in places that reference foundational programs in reading, modifications of teaching certificate levels.
 - c. There is substantial work to be accomplished in order to realize the intended effects on enhancing the quality of educators in CT.
 - i. Regulations that define the qualifications for initial and advanced specialty certificates must be defined in terms that reflect foundational knowledge, skill, and demonstrated competencies.
 - ii. The combination of supervised, assessed clinical practice must be alloyed with creative systems for delivery of broad exposure to options for best practice and with tool sets for critically evaluating practice for its effectiveness.
 - iii. Not all can be achieved in clinical setting, not all through traditional instruction
 - iv. We need to potentiate the development of innovative systems without rejecting the values in existing modalities.
 - v. Continued collaboration among the various providers and consumers of professional development is essential.
- 3) Credits/ degrees/ CEUs, evaluations --**old categories/ definitions modalities need creative recasting**
- a. The higher Education community has traditionally use Carnegie unit metrics to define our work (credit hours, semesters, courses, contact time, degrees). Increasingly, it becomes clear that the relevant metric should be defined in terms of outcome, demonstrated competency, and professional effect.
 - b. We are therefore challenged to disrupt our traditional delivery systems (while still operating within institutional systems)

- c. As expectations for credential, certificate, career path, etc. are defined in terms of fair and effective measures of educator performance and that these increasingly link teachers' professional development paths to identified opportunities for improvement that are related to student growth. We, in higher Education, are eager to work toward discovering those innovations.
 - d. This must be done in consort with the community of stakeholders.
- 4) Professional status. --**multiple ways of enhancing prestige/ status of the teaching profession are needed – advanced degrees are a possibility**
- a. The data from international communities that are renowned for highly effective teaching regularly notices that, in these places, members of the teaching profession enjoy remarkably high regard . It should be an essential part of our reform efforts to celebrate the commitment and achievement of our professional educators.
 - b. The proposed bill removes an existing requirement for continued academic achievement in the form of post certificate graduate except for persons with identified deficiency or for aspirants to the Master's teacher certificate.
 - i. I propose that the purpose for the two are dissimilar,
 - 1. One for rescuing a lapsed certificate
 - 2. One to aspiring to higher levels of professional accomplishment
 - ii. Therefore the language needs careful attention
 - 1. In collaboration with the higher Education community and the other stake holders, we should consider discovering new language (and systems) to define the expectation of the activity.
 - 2. More credits should be less important than defined achievement
 - 3. The accession to Master teacher level should be convergent with the achievement of academic benchmarks with public recognition value.



SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

Testimony for the Education Committee

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The manner in which the **Governor's Bill 24: AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS** is written raises certain questions, challenges and opportunities related to higher education institutions in Connecticut. Teacher effectiveness on student achievement as measured by district-based and school-based evaluations has implications for educator preparation programs that have yet to be clarified.

In reviewing Sections 26 and 28 of the legislation certain conclusions can be drawn about the role of higher education institutions in the changes outlined by the Governor. The legislation raises questions, offers challenges and suggests opportunities for Connecticut universities.

First, initial educator certificate programs in teaching are not directly affected by the legislation. They are, however, indirectly affected. Universities will be challenged to modify their programs to attend to the needs of the certification graduates upon entering a highly- regulated evaluative environment based on student achievement. In the new k-12 environment envisioned by the State, universities and state authorities together will need to reexamine and identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are required for university graduates to achieve the level of excellence envisioned by the state in teaching, administering, and most importantly meeting the student achievement goals set by districts and the state.

The legislation replaces the Professional Educator Certificate with the Master Educator Certificate. The issuance of the Master certificate requires the completion of a "master's degree in an evaluation –informed course of study" from a program approved by the CSDE, instead of the 30 post-baccalaureate credits required for the present certificate. Questions will need to be asked and solutions sought for issues related to the specialization area of the degree -- i.e. education or other subject, the status of out-of-state post- baccalaureate degrees, the meaning and

operational definition of “evaluation-informed course of study”, and the criteria by which a master’s degree will be judged appropriate. The state department of education and higher education institutions will be challenged to establish a well-defined procedure for defining and approving evaluation-informed Master’s degrees.

The new legislation redefines certain aspects of the working relationship between the state and higher education institutions. Professional development issues, for example, as outlined in the legislation raises questions and creates challenges for districts and universities. The legislation eliminates course and credit requirements for continuance of the new professional educator certificate; eliminates CEUs; caps the number of hours of professional development in institutional settings; and places the responsibility for professional development almost exclusively in the hands of the districts. These measures limit the traditional role that universities have traditionally had in contributing to the professional development of public school teachers. The challenge facing schools, districts and universities is to establish a newly-defined working relationship, one that encourages the participation of higher education institutions in districts’ efforts to improve the quality of educational practitioners and to increase measured student achievement. We are all challenged to reach a consensus that the university can and should continue to be a resource for professional development programs in the districts.

The legislation also challenges schools and districts to measure teacher effectiveness on a number of variables, the most prominent being student achievement.

Finally, the legislation provides a third avenue for obtaining the initial educator certificate. The issuance of the certificate through an alternate route to certification by non-university public and private educational entities is disquieting, and yet challenging. At issue is the State’s commitment to and perception of the university as the primary vehicle for providing public school educators. The legislation challenges all stakeholders to examine the devolution of this fundamental relationship, as well as the proposal to authorize alternate institutions to assume the role that the university has steadfastly played. Challenging questions will be raised about the nature of these programs, how they compare to university programs, what standards they adhere to, how they relate to state and national accreditation bodies, how information on their graduates will be incorporated into state reports. These and many other questions challenge us to think carefully and act judiciously when proposing a course of action that significantly alters the role of university in preparing educators for the state.

The proposal presents a disquieting view of the State’s perception of the role of universities in preparing well-qualified educators in the state. It is our hope that when the nature and the criteria for evaluating the appropriateness of alternate routes to certification are revealed, a clearer understanding of the collaborative relationship between educational preparation programs and the state will merge.