

Legislative testimony  
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My name is Tom Defranco, Dean of the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. The mission of the Neag School is to prepare excellent, effective teachers, principals and superintendents who believe that every child deserves a high quality education and have the skills to ensure that every child reaches his or her highest potential. We are committed to working with others to close Connecticut's achievement gap and to make Connecticut's education system the best in the country.

I am here today to speak in favor of elements of the governor's bill concerning teacher preparation.

1. We support raising admissions standards to teacher preparation programs. We agree that academically high achieving college students make the best teachers. At Neag we have long held high standards for entry into our teacher preparation programs. We not only require a strong overall grade point average, but also examine academic achievement in the subjects candidates hope to teach, require applicants to have prior experience working with students in classroom settings, and interview our candidates to assess their commitment to educational equity and effective instruction.
2. We support the governor's proposals to attract students who demonstrate academic excellence to the teaching profession and encourage them to teach in priority school districts through the best teacher scholarship program. We encourage the development of screening procedures to determine that recipients are, in fact, committed to educating students in high needs schools and the careful conscious preparation of these candidates to teach effectively to accelerate student learning and achievement, particularly in high need schools.
3. We support the governor's proposal to link the quality of teacher education programs to the quality of instruction their graduates deliver in the classroom as measured by pupil performance, new teacher evaluation, and employing district feedback. Teacher preparation programs are in the business of preparing people for an important and challenging profession. It makes sense that we would be evaluated on how well we are doing by examining the success of our graduates in the profession for which we have prepared them. Pupil performance of our graduates is one way to measure the effectiveness of their teaching. In the Neag School of Education, we are engaged in a project called Educational Expansions, partially funded by the Carnegie Corporation's Teachers for a New Era grant, through which we have conducted, in collaboration with a number of school districts, a follow along study of our graduates and their pupils' CMT scores. The analysis has allowed us to compare the performance of pupils taught by Neag graduates to the performance of

pupils taught by all other teachers. The analysis of strand performance on the CMT has also helped us improve and enhance our program in math and reading instruction. The access to pupil data through the school districts has been invaluable for us, but also labor intensive. In other states, the state departments of education have provided substantial assistance through data warehousing, data organization, and data access to conduct these important reviews. If the effort to employ pupil data to inform teacher preparation program is to be successful, the state department of education must develop a comprehensive and accessible database that can deliver results to programs in a timely manner.

4. We support the Connecticut Leadership Academy to provide educational management and professional development to administrators in low performing schools. The state of Connecticut has many expert school and district leaders and university faculty who should be part of the efforts to grow a program. Including state expertise will give us a sustainable, flexible academy that our state can rely on to address Connecticut's unique challenges of school and district leadership as we work together to turn around lowest performing schools.