

Testimony on Raised Bill No. 7021: An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficiency

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Dear Representative Fleischmann, Senator Schlossberg and members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Raised Bill No. 7021, An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficiency.

I am unable to appear in person, but I submit this written testimony for your consideration. My name is Aram Ayalon and I am Professor of Education at Central Connecticut State University, where I have been a teacher educator for 14 years. I have taught Hundreds of future teachers in my time at CCSU and conduct research on teacher-student mentoring, multicultural education, and bilingual education.

On the basis of my teaching experience and research, I strongly oppose this bill. Let me explain why:

- 1) The State of Connecticut currently relies on professional accrediting bodies to inform decisions about teacher education. These bodies base their evaluations and recommendations on on-site visits by subject area specialists. This bill would override assessment by experts and institute new reporting criteria and requirements that research does not show to be valid or reliable measures of teacher education program quality.
- 2) It will move evaluation of teacher education programs out of the hands of professional accrediting bodies and place it in the arena of politics. That may result in a stifling of teacher education faculty criticism of state education initiatives for fear of retaliation.
- 3) The bill would make teacher education programs responsible for the socio-economic condition of students in our state, but teachers and education programs have no control over such conditions. Research shows that students' standardized test scores are poor indicators of teacher preparation program quality. Rather, such test scores primarily reflect students' socio-economic status and parent education. This bill would evaluate teacher preparation on factors over

which teachers and teacher preparation programs have little control.

- 4) The bill would evaluate teacher education programs on the basis of job attainment, which has more to do with the Connecticut economy and state and municipal education spending than with teacher educator program quality. More specifically, teacher education program graduates' job acquisition depends on the teaching job market, current teacher retirements and resignations, as well as the budget allocation of each school district. Since 2007-8, newly minted teachers have faced an employment situation shaped by recession and municipal budget cuts over which the training programs had no control.
- 5) The bill is overly broad: It does not indicate at what point teachers will be measured. A first year graduate and a fifth year graduate have significant differences in their performance attainment. Furthermore, teacher education quality might actually reflect the ratio of teacher candidates who got jobs in suburban and upscale districts where test scores are generally high versus those working in urban schools district where test scores of students are low.
- 6) The bill assumes that teacher education graduate retention rates reflect on the new teachers' academic program, when it actually reflects a variety of factors, including women's departure from the job market for child rearing, change of school districts, or movement into administration.
- 7) The bill ties college curriculum to school standardized tests: It will require professors throughout the universities that educate future teachers to shape their courses around elementary, middle and high school standardized tests, placing the decisions about what future teachers should learn into the hands of standardized test preparers rather than university faculty.

I urge the Education committee to oppose this legislation and let the accreditation bodies do their job. Thank you for accepting this written testimony.

Respectfully submitted:

Aram Ayalon

