QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Testimony for the
Education Committee
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Good afternoon Representative Fleischmann, Senator Slossberg and members of the Education Committee. As Dean of the School of Education at Quinnipiac University, I am here to offer specific comments on HB 7021, as well as a general comment on other bills on today's agenda.

HB 7021: An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficacy, requires the Office of Higher Education to evaluate and assess teacher preparation programs on an annual basis, beginning this year. While I recognize the Committee's desire for more information on the outcomes of the graduates of our teacher preparation programs, this proposal duplicates or contradicts much of the current progress already being made on this matter.

Over the past two years, the CT State Department of Education (SDE) has been working with diverse stakeholders on teacher preparation efficacy through EPAC, the Educator Preparation Advisory Council. While the EPAC process has been far from perfect, and stakeholders have frequently debated each other about appropriate inputs, measures, and outcomes for teacher preparation, it has strived to be a collaborative and inclusive effort and progress is being made.

In addition, as you are likely aware, the U.S. Department of Education recently proposed regulations for the assessment of teacher preparation programs. To layer HB 7021 on top of these regulations, in addition to EPAC efforts, seems overkill and counterproductive at best, and at worst will lead to an incoherent and completely ineffective system of accountability for teacher preparation in Connecticut.

Finally, I offer you my honest, ground-level perspective on the state of the teaching profession. Every year, we in Connecticut are losing hundreds if not thousands of creative, inspiring, and exceptional teachers because of the standardized and over-regulated classroom environments we have created through our policies, including our overuses and misuses of standardized tests as a proxies for student learning. Every one of my fellow deans and directors of teacher education programs supports the highest standards and outcomes for our graduates. Every one of them – myself included – supports the perspective that teacher preparation programs should be held accountable for the quality of their graduates.

What all of us object to, and what concerns us deeply regarding the future of Connecticut public education, is the developing association in our state between “standards” and “standardization.” These two concepts are as different as apples and grapefruits, and yet in Connecticut they are quickly becoming synonyms of each other – not only in teacher preparation, but also in the context of teacher evaluations. Our failure to differentiate between these two very different processes will have grave implications for the future of public education in our state.

In terms of the other bills on today’s agenda related to teacher preparation or certification – including SB 1054, an Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia, which was discussed last week – I urge the Committee to move forward with extreme caution and due diligence before voting to approve. If we act too hastily, or fail to understand the unintended consequences of new regulations, we run the risk of making worse the very problems we are attempting to solve, including and especially the growing achievement gap between our state’s upper and middle-class white students, and their low-income peers, most of whom happen to be students of color.

Thank you.