

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

TEACHFORAMERICA

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Testimony to Education Committee
March 19, 2015

Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Raised Bills 1098, 7016, 7020, and 7021.

My name is Nate Snow and I serve as the executive director of Teach For America – Connecticut. We are part of a national non-profit organization working in partnership with schools and districts to end educational inequity that falls along the lines of race and class. We currently have partnerships with schools in Hartford, Windham, New Britain, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Stamford. We train and support teachers as a state-accredited teacher preparation program and support the alumni of our program in their continued pursuit of educational equity in the classroom and beyond.

Overall I'm speaking in support of these bills and would like to use my time to make the following points related to 1098, 7016, 7020, and 7021:

Related to Raised Bill 1098, as an organization we deeply believe that teachers can have tremendous influence in the lives of their students and that excellent teachers come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We also believe that teachers who share the background of their students have the potential for profound additional influence on their students. We fully support the requirement for districts to demonstrate strategies for recruiting and attracting underrepresented groups as a condition of alliance district funding. Similarly we understand the critical importance of cultural competence and support the requirement that any teacher in a program for professional endorsement must have cultural competence training. We support the effort to enhance the ability of effective out-of-state educators to meet licensure requirements for the State of Connecticut. Finally, we fully support the raised amendment to Sec. 5 Subsection (f) making the elementary endorsement grades kindergarten to six, inclusive.

With respect to Raised Bill 7016, specifically Sec. 12, Subsection (d)(1), as a teacher preparation program we consider it our responsibility to provide training in special education. At the same time, we believe the proposed language beginning at subsection (d)(1)(B), describes teacher professional development that is best delivered in-service. The foundational course work described in (d)(1)(A) is in line with course work already provided. However, in our experience as a teacher preparation program we believe the additional course



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requirement in (d)(1)(B) is best delivered as in-service training for teachers who have a specific need for learning and development in any of those distinct and particular areas.

With respect to Raised Bill 7020, we believe that all students, including our youngest learners, deserve an excellent, well-trained educator to prepare them for success in the K-12 system. We fully support the spirit of the Bill in ensuring certified educators are teaching in our pre-school programs. In this same spirit, we respectfully request that consideration be given to making a small technical amendment to staffing qualifications for teachers associated with early childhood education programs funded through the Connecticut SmartStart program. We seek to ensure that teachers holding certification either pursuant to 10-145 b or to 10-145m—with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education—be more clearly envisioned in the law.

Finally, with respect to Raised Bill 7021, we support the intent of the bill. Additionally, we would call the committee's attention to the language usage of "alliance district" in Sec. 2 Subsection (j). We would recommend clarifying the intent of this language. Does the committee mean, essentially, that a candidate, in order to gain certification, has a variety of school and community experiences during clinical practice? We agree, but we interpret the raised language to be limiting in achieving this goal, both as a matter of time (an alliance district today is not necessarily an alliance district three years from now) and as a matter of diversity (while some alliance districts share similarities in terms of student demographic diversity, some alliance districts are more closely reflect the demographic trends of non-alliance schools districts). Regarding cooperating teacher competency standards in this same section, we would respectfully request that the language in the bill be expanded to include equivalent competency ratings in other states so that excellent educators desiring to live in Connecticut but who complete their clinical experience outside of the state can contribute positively to our schools, districts, students and families.

In conclusion, we support these Raised Bills and believe they can be made even stronger with minor corrections and clarifications. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment; we applaud your commitment to improve teaching and learning for all students in Connecticut.