



**Testimony by Jeffrey Villar, Ph.D. to the Appropriations Committee  
March 19, 2015**

Members of the Education Committee. My name is Jeffrey Villar, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER), a nonprofit that seeks to narrow Connecticut's achievement gap while raising academic outcomes for all students. I would like to voice my support for four bills, which contemplate (1) assessments, (2) broadening the pool of high-quality educators, (3) teacher preparation, and (4) early childhood education.

**(1) Student Assessments**

Senate Bill 1095--*An Act Concerning Students Assessments*--amends Connecticut statutes to re-define the term "mastery examination" and to update the grades in which the state's standardized assessment will be administered. It also calls for a study of the impact to students of taking the statewide mastery examination, the extent to which the examination aligns with curriculum standards, and the precise federal requirements related to statewide testing. These are all worthy issues to explore, and CCER supports any study that grants the General Assembly greater access to quality information about assessments, particularly because there has been so much misinformation spread on this topic.

Standardized assessments are extremely important to our system of accountability in Connecticut for two reasons. First, Connecticut has invested greatly in time and resources dedicated toward improve public education. Assessments allow us to objectively measure student growth progress, and, accordingly, the effectiveness of these policy initiatives. Without an objective metric to monitor our progress, it would be difficult to know how to adjust our system to make it better for kids.

Perhaps the most important reason that standardized assessments are important is because they help us to track whether districts and schools are educating groups of students equitably. Without standardized testing, for instance, we would not have known that Connecticut has the widest achievement gap in the nation. Our failure to properly educate groups of students—such as children who come from low-income backgrounds or children who are minorities—is an important civil rights issue. Assessments allow us to shine a light on this problem, and keep pushing for a solution.

While we support a study on assessments, we are also firm that the administration of assessments this year is a critical part of ensuring accountability in public education.

**(2) Broadening the Pool of High-Quality Educators**

Regarding S.B. 1098--*An Act Concerning Teacher Certification Requirements for Shortage Areas, Interstate Agreements for Teacher Certification Reciprocity, Minority Teacher Recruitment and*

*Retention and Cultural Competency Instruction*--we strongly support many aspects of this bill. In particular, it would:

- Require the Commissioner to sign interstate agreements on certification reciprocity;
- Reduce the number of years of teaching that out-of-state teachers must have taught in order to work in Connecticut without taking on more testing; and
- Require the Office of Higher Education to create a new Alternate Route to Certification for administrators.

These are all exciting and bold initiatives that would expand our pool of teacher and administrator candidates, thereby creating greater opportunities for Connecticut schools and districts to hire highly qualified educators. CCER is extremely supportive of these measures.

However, we propose that S.B. 1098 be amended in the following ways:

- In Section 4, we would add that the regulations regarding administrator and supervisor certificates that were proposed by the State Board of Education in 2010 shall be implemented by the Department of Education on July 1, 2015. (See our educator certification reciprocity document in Appendix B.)
- In Section 9, we would provide greater specificity about the types of incentives that will be of benefit to excellent teacher candidates who are committed to working in Connecticut's Alliance Districts. (See proposed amendment language in Appendix A.)

Jeffrey A. Villar 3/17/15 4:06 PM

**Comment [1]:** It would be very helpful for me to have an understand of the proposed regulations, do we have them?

### **(3) Improving Teacher Preparation**

Regarding H.B. 7021--*An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation Program Efficacy*--CCER strongly supports increasing the number of clinical experiences that are required as components of teacher preparation programs. This bill would require teacher candidates to gain exposure to classrooms within the Alliance Districts and within other districts, during four semesters of teacher preparation. Research indicates that when teacher preparation is directly linked to educator practices, programs produce more effective first year teachers.<sup>i</sup>

However, CCER would also like to see an increased focus on the number of hours dedicated to clinical experience in Connecticut's teacher preparation programs. While student teaching experiences nationally range from 500-562 hours,<sup>ii</sup> Connecticut candidates only spend 300-560 hours on clinical experiences.<sup>iii</sup>

### **(4) School Readiness Slots of Early Childhood Education**

CCER would like to express its support for Section 1 of S.B. 1101--*An Act Concerning the Office of Early Childhood*. This section appears to remove language that limits children's eligibility for School Readiness slots. Currently, section 10-15p(c) requires children seeking School Readiness slots to reside in priority school districts or former priority school districts. This statute ignores many children who come from low-income families but do not live in the precise communities listed. In order to serve those students—who we believe to be part of the constituents intended to be served by the School Readiness program—we strongly support the language in Section 1.

## APPENDIX A: QUALITY TEACHERS FOR LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

**Proposal: Restructure an incentive program to attract and retain exceptional teachers in low-performing schools and districts. This program should be restructured to include grants (for education majors in their junior and senior years of college) and loan reimbursement funding (incentives to teach in the Alliance Districts for four years).**

**Amendment: Strike Section 9 and substitute the following in lieu thereof:**

Section 10-265o of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2015) (a) For the fiscal year ending June 30, [2014] 2016, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Department of Education shall establish the [municipal aid for] new educators grant program. On or before March first of each year, the program shall, within available appropriations, provide grants to candidates in the top ten percent of their classes entering teacher preparation programs offered by a state public or private institution of higher education. In order to be eligible, candidates must agree to teach in an alliance district, as defined in section 10-262u or in a low-performing school as determined by the commissioner of education.

(b) Within available appropriations, the program shall provide grants to students (1) in teacher preparation programs for their junior or senior year, or both such years, at any four-year institution of higher education or (2) enrolled in the alternate route to certification program administered through the Office of Higher Education. No student shall receive a grant under the program for more than two years. Maximum grants shall not exceed seven thousand dollars per year.

(c) A student who received grants under subsection (b) of this section, and who teaches in an alliance district public school or other low-performing school upon graduation, shall be eligible for reimbursement of federal or state educational loans up to a maximum of three thousand five hundred dollars per year for up to four years of teaching service.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the combined dollar value of grants and loan reimbursements shall not exceed twenty eight thousand dollars per student.

## APPENDIX B: EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION RECIPROCITY

### Introduction to Interstate Mobility

Between states in America, there is no strict reciprocity for educator certification. States impose different requirements on out-of-state candidates. However, numerous states have taken steps to encourage teacher and administrator interstate mobility by increasing flexibility and making the process easier for out-of-state candidates.

### *Increasing Interstate Mobility for Teachers*

#### **Teacher Turnover and Shortages in Connecticut**

Connecticut's lowest performing districts have high rates of teacher turnover.<sup>iv</sup> The table below demonstrates the significant problems that Alliance Districts have in recruiting and retaining teachers.

<i>District</i>	<i>Teacher Vacancies FY 2014<sup>v</sup></i>	<i>Not filled by October 1<sup>vi</sup></i>
Alliance Districts (30)	2,293	193
All other (139)	2,187	93

Filling these positions is particularly challenging, especially in the teacher shortage areas of world languages, bilingual education, special education, science/math, and intermediate administration.<sup>vii</sup>

To address the high teacher turnover in low-performing school districts and in teacher shortage areas, Connecticut should be looking for ways to broaden its pool of applicants, including by removing unnecessary barriers that prevent out-of-state talent from entering our state.

#### **Recommendations**

CT's required teacher assessments are time-consuming,<sup>viii</sup> costly,<sup>ix</sup> and create barriers for potential teachers.<sup>x</sup> While CT waives assessments for out-of-state candidates *with three years of teaching experience in the same endorsement in the same state and school system, there are others whose teaching experience does not quite fit into the state's narrow waiver window.*<sup>xi</sup>

With high levels of turnover in low-performing schools and a dearth of teachers in certain key shortage areas, it makes sense to consider changes that could encourage more educators, especially those willing to teach in low-performing schools or in shortage areas, to come here and teach.

Connecticut should therefore pursue measures that will introduce some much-needed flexibility for out-of-state candidates, without compromising the quality of its teachers. The following modest changes to Connecticut's teacher assessment requirements and policies on reporting requirements could make it easier for strong out-of-state educators to pursue licensure here:

- 1. Eliminate the "same state, same school system" experience requirement; and**
- 2. Broaden the requirement for the "same endorsement," which could increase the number of candidates whose tests were waived.**

#### **Counterargument**

Our neighboring states are beginning to increase their licensing requirements, which makes licensing more problematic for prospective teachers, including those from out-of-state. For instance, in the past year, New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire have all added assessments or special endorsements to their teacher licensing requirements, making licensing more challenging for out-of-state candidates.<sup>xii</sup>

Despite this emerging trend, Connecticut should still heavily consider the above-mentioned opportunities. Introducing new talent into the teacher candidate pool will serve to increase competition and provide our schools and districts with better options for their classrooms.

### *Increasing Interstate Mobility for Administrators*

#### **Administrator Shortages in Connecticut**

Administrative educator positions, such as principal, assistant principal, or supervisor of instruction, are in short supply in CT.<sup>xiii</sup> In 2013, these administrator positions were so difficult to fill that durational shortage area permits (DSAPs)<sup>xiv</sup> were issued more frequently for these endorsements than for any of the other educator shortage areas.<sup>xv</sup>

#### **Recommendations**

Since CT has difficulty filling these critical administrative positions, it is important for the state to open up the administrator candidate pool to include more out-of-state school administrators.

In 2010, the State Board of Education (SBE) proposed changes to administrator certification requirements that would reduce the years of experience required and create a new pathway to become certified. The following is the SBE's proposed framework:

1. Reduce the required number of years teaching from 5<sup>xvi</sup> to 4<sup>xvii</sup>
  - a. CT's neighbors (Massachusetts<sup>xviii</sup>, New York<sup>xix</sup>, and Rhode Island<sup>xx</sup>) only require 3 years of teaching experience before administrator certification.
2. Create another pathway to certification, which would:
  - a. Revise the academic course work requirements from a Master's (MA) degree +18 graduate credits to a MA including 18 credits of specific coursework.<sup>xxi</sup>
    - i. Rhode Island requires its out-of-state applicants to have a MA and proof of specific education graduate coursework.<sup>xxii</sup>
  - b. Add an internship requirement that would be full-time and district supervised.<sup>xxiii</sup>
    - i. Rhode Island requires a 300 hour internship for its administrators.<sup>xxiv</sup>
    - ii. Massachusetts includes internships and apprenticeships as one of their pathways to certification.<sup>xxv</sup>

Connecticut could make it easier for out-of-state administrators to come here if the **SBE's proposed certification regulations were implemented legislatively**, rather than through the state's regulations approval process.<sup>xxvi</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement, Donald J. Boyd, Pamela L. Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, James Wyckoff, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, December 2009, Vol. 31, No. 4, retrieved from: <http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Preparation%20and%20Achievement.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Federal Department of Education Title 2 data from FY 2013, retrieved from <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Report/PrintSection.aspx?Year=2013&StateID=09&Section=130150>

<sup>iv</sup> For instance, in 2014, by October of that year, the state's 10 lowest performing school districts had the highest number of unfilled positions, retrieved from "State Department of Education Data Bulletin on Public School Hiring Trends and Teacher Shortage Areas in FY 2014-15", May 2014, retrieved from:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/databulletinmay2014.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vii</sup> This is not the complete list of teacher shortage areas, see this report for entire list: "State Department of Education Data Bulletin on Public School Hiring Trends and Teacher Shortage Areas in FY 2014-15", May 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/databulletinmay2014.pdf>.

<sup>viii</sup> For instance, the Pearson Foundations of Reading test is a paper-and-pencil test that takes four hours.

Retrieved from: [http://www.ct.nesinc.com/PDFs/FoundationsofReading\\_SG\\_Sect\\_1.pdf](http://www.ct.nesinc.com/PDFs/FoundationsofReading_SG_Sect_1.pdf).

<sup>ix</sup> Candidates might be required to take more than one test. For example, elementary education teachers must pass the Elementary Education Multiple Subjects Test which is \$150 and the Pearson Foundations of Reading which is \$155.

Retrieved from ETS: <https://www.ets.org/praxis/about/fees/> and Pearson:

[http://www.ct.nesinc.com/CT\\_testinfo.asp?t=090](http://www.ct.nesinc.com/CT_testinfo.asp?t=090)

<sup>x</sup> There is tentative evidence that streamlined routes to credentialing provide more incentive to enter teaching than monetary rewards according to a literature review done here:

"Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Review of the Recent Empirical Literature," Cassandra M. Guarino, Lucrecia Santibañez and Glenn A. Daley, *REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH* 2006 76: 173, retrieved from: <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/76/2/173>.

<sup>xi</sup> A Master's Degree will also allow for the waiving of the assessments but these must be subject specific; for instance it cannot be in elementary education according to "Obtaining Connecticut certification," State Department of Education, December, 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cert/obtaining1109aw.pdf>

<sup>xii</sup> New York added new assessments as of May 1, 2014, retrieved from NY State Education Department, retrieved from:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificates/certexamsnew2014.html>; Massachusetts added a requirement for a Sheltered English Immersion endorsement as of July 1, 2014, retrieved from: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Out-of-State Applicants/Interstate Agreement, retrieved from:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/nasdtec.html>; and New Hampshire added a new assessment (Pearson's Foundations of Reading) for elementary and other educators, as of July 1, 2014, retrieved from: NH brochure on certification requirements, retrieved from: <http://www.education.nh.gov/certification/documents/brochure.pdf>.

<sup>xiii</sup> "State Department of Education Data Bulletin on Public School Hiring Trends and Teacher Shortage Areas in FY 2014-15", May 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/databulletinmay2014.pdf>

<sup>xiv</sup> DSAPs are issued when a candidate does not have all of the requirements completed to be certified in a shortage area; there is a one year window (with the possibility of two one year renewals) to complete coursework, pass assessments, and complete any other requirements. Connecticut Regulations, Sec. 10-145d-421, retrieved from: [http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/regulations/title\\_10/145d.pdf](http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/regulations/title_10/145d.pdf)

<sup>xv</sup> "State Department of Education Data Bulletin on Public School Hiring Trends and Teacher Shortage Areas in FY 2014-15", May 2014, retrieved from: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/evalresearch/databulletinmay2014.pdf>

<sup>xvi</sup> One year of an internship could substitute for one year of teaching experience, from Regulations Sec. 10-145d-574., retrieved from: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/Cert/regulations/regulations.pdf>

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xviii</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, retrieved from:

<https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/elar/licensurehelp/LicenseRequirementsCriteriaPostControl.ser?COMMAND.next=next>

<sup>xix</sup> New York requirements for administrator certification for school principals, retrieved from <http://eservices.nysed.gov/teach/certhelp/CertRequirementHelp.do>

<sup>xx</sup> Rhode Island requirements for administrator certification for school principals, retrieved from:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-Requirements/Adm-BuildAdm-Req.pdf>

<sup>xxi</sup> The proposed certification regulations provide two pathways for administrator certification, one of which allows 18 credits (including a one-year, full-time internship) to be earned as part of the Master's degree, plus 12 credits or a certification as a department chair, literacy coach, or special education intervention specialist, all of which require some levels of graduate work up to and including a Master's degree, retrieved from the 2010 proposed regulations adopted by the State Board of Education: [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cert/regulations/Regulations\\_Adopted\\_on\\_12-1-2010.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cert/regulations/Regulations_Adopted_on_12-1-2010.pdf)

<sup>xxii</sup> The coursework includes: Learning Theory; Curriculum Theory, Design and Development; Supervision Theory, Application and Practice; Instructional Theory, Application and Practice; and Research and Evaluation Related to

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Curriculum and Supervision of Instruction; Rhode Island requirements for administrator certification for school principals, retrieved from: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-Requirements/Adm-BuildAdm-Req.pdf>

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Rhode Island requirements for administrator certification for school principals, retrieved from: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Cert-Requirements/Adm-BuildAdm-Req.pdf>

<sup>xxv</sup> "Overview of Administrator Routes to Initial Licensure 603 CMR 7.00&Guidelines for the Administrative Apprenticeship/Internship and Panel Review Routes", 2014, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, retrieved from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/AdminRoutes.pdf>

<sup>xxvi</sup> The State Board of Education adopted these regulations in 2010 with an implementation date of July 1, 2015, but they are not on the Regulations Review Committee agendas through Feb. 2015, which can be found here: [http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CommDocList.asp?comm\\_code=rr&doc\\_type=cg](http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CommDocList.asp?comm_code=rr&doc_type=cg)