



Testimony of
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Education Committee Hearing
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SB 174 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study Professional Development and In-Service Training Requirements for Educators

HB 5305 An Act Concerning School Paraprofessional Training

SB 175 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Department of Education

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Jan Hochadel. I have been a teacher in the Connecticut Technical High School System and am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing more than 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses and other school personnel across the state. It is on their behalf that I appear before you to today.

SB 174 An Act Establishing A Task Force to Study Professional Development and In-Service Training Requirements for Educators

Professional development offers essential resources for teachers to revamp, refine, and update their practice. As much as relevant, high-quality professional development is needed, it is rarely delivered in timely or consistent manners within and among districts. We applaud the spirit of SB 174 to get an understanding of the types and delivery of professional development across the state. Expectations on educators are higher than have ever been. They need tools and supports to help them meet and exceed those demands.

We strongly urge you to add a paraprofessional to the membership of the task force and also study issues related to professional development for paraprofessionals. As with teachers, paraprofessionals must meet high standards, but districts often neglect their training and professional learning needs. Our public schools ask more of paraprofessionals every year. It is time we provided them high quality professional development opportunities to help them succeed.

HB 5305 An Act Concerning School Paraprofessional Training

As a teacher, I know the important role paraprofessionals play in the reinforcement of academic instruction and the vital assistance they provide to special education students. They are driven and passionate partners in educating students, yet they often perform their roles without sufficient training or explanation of their responsibilities. It is also not unusual for their assignments to change throughout the year. HB 5305 would provide essential information and supports to paraprofessionals so they may perform their jobs with the highest levels of

effectiveness, which is what they all strive to do. I ask that you support our paraprofessionals by passing HB 5305.

SB 175 An Act Concerning Recommendations of the Department of Education

As an educator who earned most of my teaching experience at a technical high school in Stamford, I appreciate the Department of Education's efforts to retain and recruit a diverse teaching force. It is important for students of color to connect with their teachers and to see teaching as a noble, important career. This can only occur if the teaching population mirrors – as much as possible – the student population.

Much work has been done recently at both the legislative level and the SDE level to study minority teacher recruitment. I applaud these efforts. Having attended the SDE meetings, I appreciate the programs developed by the four pilot districts. In addition to focusing on establishing interstate agreements with other states, territories, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, it is my hope that research will continue to attract educators of color from within Connecticut.

One such program is the development of a pipeline for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers. In order for this type of program to become successful, the state may want to consider a task force charged with investigating the challenges of a mentor support program such as providing support and guidance, developing a study/preparation program designed to help with the content and test taking skills needed to be successful in passing the Praxis, and establishing a grant program to help with the cost of student teaching and additional teaching classes.

Another program, which began in Hartford, is to establish a cohort of students at the high school level whose program of study is teacher preparation. In order for this program to be more successful, support is needed in helping attract students in junior high and in educating parents to get them excited about the profession. The education bills before the committee provide an opportunity to recruit teachers prepared to work with a diverse student population, and provide them the professional development needed to build outstanding careers as educators.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.