

Chris Rice, Ward One Co-Chair
Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education
In Support of SB 379
AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINORITY TEACHER
RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE
March 7, 2016

Good Evening Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Fleischmann and distinguished members of Education Committee. I thank you all for the opportunity to testify today on this important issue.

My name is Chris Rice and I am the New Haven Ward One DTC Committee Co-Chair and a student at Yale University. At Yale, I am the President of La Unidad Latina, our first and only Latino fraternity and a member of MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), a student activist group. I am also the Founder and Executive Director of A Better Hand, a Houston based student-led organization that is dedicated to increasing access to higher education for low-income students of color.

I have dedicated myself to the advancement of the Latino community and I firmly believe that education is essential to the fulfillment of our people. As such, I come to you this evening in support of SB 379 because I'm convinced this bill helps make certain our children get the great educators they need to succeed in the classroom.

I want to start off by saying that every child, regardless of their race, wealth or zip code, should have a access to the great teachers and principals that can change their lives. They are the backbone of any effective education system. In fact, we know that teachers and principals are the two most important factors that impact student achievement a school can control for.

So when we talk about narrowing our pervasive achievement gaps, in which Connecticut has had some of the largest in the nation, it is important we focus on how an effective teacher, and how an increase in the diversity of our teaching workforce, can help us do it.

Today, I ask you all to join together just as you did last session. Just a few short months ago you all worked diligently and passed Public Act 15-108, an important piece of legislation designed to improve teacher preparation programs and our state's ability to recruit and retain effective teachers of color. You recognized that having nearly half a student population as students of color but less than 10% of teachers of color simply didn't add up. And when you consider the positive impact of diversity in the classroom, you all recognized that it was educational unsound not to try and improve our ability to recruit candidates of color to teach in Connecticut's schools.

I anticipate the findings and legislative proposals from the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, but would it is clear effective licensure reciprocity policies would go a long