

**Lerone Testimony**  
Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education Public Hearing  
**SB 379: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force:**

Monday, March 7, 2016

Good evening Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I thank you for the chance to come before this committee and provide a perspective sometimes missing from the conversation on schools and students in our state, the perspective of the parent

My name is Lerone Holloway. I am was born and raised in the City of New Haven, I am a member of the Waterbury community, and most importantly, I am a parent of a nine year old child named Dashawn Holloway currently attending Chase Elementary school. In my most proud and important role as a parent, I want to ensure that the school I send my child to has the resources, tools and supports necessary to make certain my child is receiving an education they can count on.

And it is without hesitation that I consider the greatest resource a school can offer my child, and children all across Connecticut, is an effective educator that can inspire and lift them to new heights. In communities like Waterbury and New Haven, communities with higher than average levels of low-income students and students of color, far too many of our children lack access to a great teacher that they can see themselves in - but if there was - could make all the difference in their lives.

That's why today, I testify in strong support of Senate Bill 379: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, because as a parent, I recognize the importance and positive impact having a diverse teaching workforce can have on children like Dashawn.

Everyone in this room probably remembers the one teacher that changed their life. The one high school teacher that inspired them to think greater, imagine higher and drove curiosity and critical thinking. Perhaps that educator brought to you a perspective you didn't consider, you didn't even know existed. That's why diversity is so critical when it comes to our teaching workforce.

- We know that students of color who can learn from teachers of color perform much better on a number of indicators, including student achievement and attendance. Given the high truancy rates and pervasive achievement gaps that disproportionately affect our black and brown children, improving Connecticut's ability to bring in effective educators of color is vital in our efforts to narrow and ultimately close those gaps.
- But diversity just doesn't affect our students of color. As I mentioned earlier, the greatest educators provide our students with a perspective or point of view previously unknown to the child. This ultimately helps all our students, white or black or brown, travel through life with greater understanding of cultural differences and perspectives, and thus helps build a better sense of community in our schools and beyond into our cities.

We know from research that the largest influence on a student's academic achievement is an effective educator in the classroom - making it critical that our children, all our children, have access to a great one - and our children of color need positive role models in the classroom they can see themselves in. That's why when Senate Bill 379 proposes the continuation of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, it clearly shows this committee, and the General Assembly's, unwavering commitment to this effort that can make all the difference in the lives of children across Connecticut.

So I ask you today, please support Senate Bill 379. Our children need great teachers today. Teachers, who with their unique backgrounds and diverse experiences, can drive curiosity and understanding in the minds of children in our state. This bill helps us do just that.

Thank you.