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*Testimony of*

*Michele O'Neill*

**Connecticut Education Association**

*Before the Education Committee*

**SB 379 AAC THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MINORITY TEACHER  
RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE**

**SB 381 AAC ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY SCHOOL CLIMATE**

*March 7, 2016*

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Michele O'Neill, Educational Issues Specialist with the Connecticut Education Association. The CEA represents 43,000 active and retired teachers throughout Connecticut.

**SB 379 AND SB 381:**

The CEA strongly supports initiatives to increase the recruitment and retention of minority teachers in Connecticut public schools. The CEA has a proud history of advocating for all teachers in Connecticut, and a commitment to ensuring that teachers of color receive the opportunity, support, and engagement that they deserve.

We therefore support the provisions of SB 379 that would extend the life of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force through June of 2017, and also create the Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council within the Department of Education.

We note that the membership of the new Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council is not defined in the bill, and would ask that teachers of color from the CEA and the Connecticut American Federation of Teachers be included.

In addition, the CEA requests that this legislation go further. Members of the CEA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, or EMAC, have recommended that we need to reach out to potential teachers of color before college. Creating programs in our high schools that engage students of color who are interested in teaching are essential to creating pathways to careers in education. EMAC members have also noted that recruiting more principals and administrators of color is also important in providing the support for minority teachers.

In this regard, it is not enough to simply have a campaign to recruit teachers of color. Retention of minority teachers requires a school climate that is welcoming and supportive for all teachers. Retention of minority teachers also requires a commitment to diversity and cultural competency in all of our schools.

The CEA recommends that SB 381—a bill creating a task force to study school climate—also be modified to broaden the scope of the school climate inquiry. There should be regular, ongoing, and uniform school climate surveys in all of our schools that ask teachers and administrators questions about diversity, cultural competency, resources, and support for all teachers, including efforts to support teachers of color.

In addition, the CEA asks that the membership of the existing Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force be broadened to include minority teacher representatives from the CEA and the Connecticut American Federation of Teachers. Currently there is no such requirement and we feel this is a significant missed opportunity to hear directly from teachers of color.

Thank you very much for your consideration.