OLR Bill Analysis  
ssB 455

AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

SUMMARY

This bill makes a number of changes in the teacher certification laws to make it easier, in certain areas, to obtain certification or cross endorsement.

It also:

1. requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to identify and utilize or support a number of practices and programs to boost minority teacher recruitment;

2. requires SDE to develop a definition of educator effectiveness;

3. authorizes the Commission on Equity and Opportunity executive director to appoint three members of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, instead of the executive director, or her appointee, serving on the task force;

4. requires the State Board of Education’s (SBE) five-year education plan to include a statement that the state’s teacher workforce should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the state; and

5. creates a task force to study the feasibility of establishing and implementing an individualized program for school paraprofessionals to become certified teachers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018, except the provisions regarding a definition of educator effectiveness and the paraprofessionals task force are effective upon passage.
§§ 2-4, 6, & 10 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION

The bill makes a number of changes in teacher certification laws regarding required vocational experience, charter schools, initial certifications, and cross endorsements for those already holding a certification. It requires SBE to adopt regulations to carry out the changes.

Vocational Endorsement (§ 2)

Existing law requires SBE to adopt regulations to establish the requirements for subject area endorsements. Subject endorsements specify what areas, and at what grade level, a certified teacher can teach (e.g., high school math). The bill limits these regulations to requiring a maximum of five years of occupational, trade, or work experience necessary for vocational or other endorsements. Current regulations require at least eight years of field experience for occupational subjects in technical high schools (Conn. Agencies Reg. § 10-145d-511).

Charter School Educator Permit and Provisional Certificates (§§ 3 & 4)

By law, the three levels of teacher certification are initial, provisional, and professional, with professional being the highest level. Existing law also allows SBE to issue a charter school educator permit to a person employed as a teacher or administrator at a charter school if the person meets certain standards, including achieving a satisfactory score on the appropriate SBE-approved subject area test.

The bill requires SBE to issue a provisional educator certificate to any person who completed at least three years of successful teaching while holding a charter school educator permit and demonstrates (1) a commitment to continued education and professional development and (2) evidence of effectiveness for three consecutive school years while holding the charter school educator permit. The bill also makes conforming changes to the definition of “provisional educator certificate.”

Initial Educator Certifications (§ 6)
Current law requires SBE to issue an initial educator certificate to any person who (1) holds a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher education and (2) has completed (a) an approved educator preparation program or (b) an approved alternate route to certification (ARC) program and satisfies the requirements for one of Connecticut’s temporary certificates (either 90-day or resident certificate). The applicant also must complete an SBE-defined subject area major or qualify for the subject area major waiver. The bill provides another option by allowing a satisfactory score on a relevant examination or completion of advanced coursework in a relevant subject area instead of completing a subject area major.

**Cross Endorsements (§ 10)**

The bill requires any person who holds an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate and achieves a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate SBE-approved subject area assessment to be issued a cross endorsement in the relevant certification endorsement area corresponding to a teacher shortage area. By law, each year the commissioner must issue a list designating the subject shortage areas for certified teachers (CGS § 10-8b).

**§ 1 — RESEARCH, PRACTICES, AND RELATED STEPS**

The bill requires SDE, on or before January 1, 2019, in consultation with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council, to:

1. identify relevant research and successful practices to enhance minority teacher recruitment throughout the state;

2. identify and establish public, private, and philanthropic partnerships to increase minority teacher recruitment;

3. utilize innovative methods to attract minority candidates to the teaching profession, particularly in subject areas with teacher shortages, as determined by the education commissioner by law;

4. modernize the process for educators to obtain professional certification by eliminating obstacles to certification to increase
competitiveness with other states;

5. identify and utilize high quality, affordable, and bias-free educator tests for certification;

6. adopt passing scores for educator certification tests, that do not exceed the multi-state passing scores, to increase competitiveness with surrounding states;

7. support new and existing educator preparation programs that commit to enrolling greater numbers of minority teacher candidates in a manner that supports interstate reciprocity; and

8. advise and support local and regional boards of education to prioritize minority teacher recruitment and develop innovative strategies to attract and retain minority teachers within their districts.

For purposes of this section, “minority” means individuals whose race is other than white, or whose ethnicity is Hispanic or Latino as used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

§ 5 — EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS DEFINITION

The bill requires SDE to develop, by January 1, 2019, a definition of educator effectiveness that includes:

1. a focus on an educator's demonstrated record of improving student achievement and summative ratings of proficient or exemplary on performance evaluations; and

2. methods by which an educator can demonstrate evidence of effectiveness.

By law, the teacher evaluation system uses four levels: (1) exemplary, (2) proficient, (3) developing, and (4) below standard (CGS § 10-151b(c)).

Under the bill, in developing the definition SDE must solicit input from the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (which the law
required to craft teacher evaluation guidelines that SBE then adopted), superintendents, community leaders, industry leaders, parents, and representatives from interdistrict magnet school programs and charter schools. The department must make the definition of educator effectiveness available to boards of education and publish it on its website.

§ 7 — MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE

Under current law the Commission on Equity and Opportunity executive director, or her designee, is a member of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force. The bill increases the task force’s membership from 10 to 12 by allowing the executive director to appoint three members, one each with expertise in African American affairs, in Latino and Puerto Rican affairs, and in Asian Pacific American affairs.

§ 8 — SBE’S FIVE-YEAR EDUCATION PLAN

Current law requires that SBE craft and adopt a five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education that addresses certain issues. Under the bill, any plan adopted after July 1, 2018 must include a policy statement that the demographics of public school educators should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the state’s total population. The current five-year plan expires in 2021.

§ 9 — PARAPROFESSIONAL TASK FORCE

The bill establishes a task force to review the feasibility of establishing and implementing an individualized, accelerated program for school paraprofessionals that recognizes their classroom experience and provides high quality education for transitioning from school paraprofessional to certified teacher. It must examine the financial implications and structural changes related to establishing and implementing the program.

Under the bill, the following are members of the task force or may designate a representative:
1. education commissioner,

2. Connecticut State Colleges and Universities president, and


It also requires a representative from each of the following organizations, with the representative designated by the organization:

1. School Paraprofessional Advisory Council,

2. a school paraprofessional from each state-wide union that represents paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities,

3. Connecticut Education Association,

4. American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, and

5. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Under the bill, all appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill is enacted. Any vacancy will be filled by the designating authority.

The task force chairperson is elected from among the members and the education commissioner must schedule the first meeting, which must be within 60 days after the bill is enacted. The bill requires the task force to submit the study and any recommendations, by January 1, 2019, to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees. The task force terminates on the date it submits the report or January 1, 2019, whichever is later.

**BACKGROUND**

*Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council*

The council is part of SDE and includes parties from outside the department including members of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and representatives from higher education institutions and educator unions (CGS § 10-156bb).
COMMITTEE ACTION
Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea  35  Nay  0  (03/23/2018)