OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 455 (File 481, as amended by Senate “A”)*

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 (§§ 4 & 8).

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 (§ 1);

2. requires SDE to develop or review and approve a new alternate route to certification (ARC) program for people in certain professions to be teachers, including paraeducators, charter school teachers, veterans, and others (§ 2);

3. adds a new member to the teacher Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) and requires the council to work collaboratively with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force (§ 3);

4. authorizes (a) the chairpersons of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force to appoint a new member to the task force who will serve as the third chairperson and (b) the Commission on Equity and Opportunity executive director to appoint three members of the task force, instead of the executive director, or her appointee, serving on the task force (§ 5);

5. 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 (§ 6);

6. limits local and regional boards’ of educations minority recruitment plans to educators, rather than staff (§ 7); and

7. requires SDE to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with teacher licensure test vendors to allow some test takers to get a free retake of the exam under certain conditions (§ 9).

*Senate Amendment “A”:

1. adds the provisions regarding (a) the new ARC program for certain people, (b) an additional member to PEAC, (c) boards’ of education required minority recruitment plans, and (d) MOUs that would allow some licensure exam applicants to get a free exam retake;

2. eliminates provisions (a) on provisional certifications for charter school teachers, (b) on a definition of educator effectiveness, (c) creating a paraprofessionals task force, and (d) reducing the field experience necessary to get a vocational teacher endorsement; and

3. makes minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018, except the provision regarding the MOU to address the retaking of licensure exams is upon passage.

§§ 4 & 8 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION

The bill makes changes in teacher certification laws regarding initial certifications, cross endorsements for those already holding a certification, and certain licensure exam exceptions for out-of-state teachers.

Initial Educator Certifications (§ 4)

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 evaluation on an appropriate SBE-approved subject area assessment and completion of advanced coursework in a relevant subject area instead of completing a subject area major.

**Cross Endorsements and Out-of-State Reciprocity for Exams and Assessments (§ 8)**

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).

Also, the bill allows that any person who has achieved a satisfactory evaluation on an equivalent competency examination or subject area assessment required for educator certification in another state is not required to achieve a satisfactory evaluation on the Connecticut competency exam or subject matter assessment as long as SBE determines that the other state’s requirements for the exam or assessment are at least equivalent to those prescribed by SBE.

**§ 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, monitor, and evaluate innovative methods to attract minority candidates to the teaching profession, particularly in subject areas with teacher shortages as determined by the education commissioner as required 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;

8. monitor, advise, support, and intervene in when necessary local and regional boards’ of education efforts to prioritize minority teacher recruitment and develop innovative strategies to attract and retain minority teachers within their districts;

9. on and after July 1, 2019, include a question on the applicant demographic data for positions requiring certification in SDE’s annual hiring survey distributed to boards of education; and

10. by July 1, 2020, and each following year, submit a report on the applicant demographic data collected through the survey to the minority teacher recruitment task force and the Education Committee (see BACKGROUND).

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.

§ 2 — ARC PROGRAM FOR ALTERNATE PROFESSIONS
The bill requires SDE, in consultation with the Office of Higher Education, to develop, or review and approve, an ARC program that would be an easier route for those in alternate professions to obtain an initial educator certification, the first level of the state’s three levels of certification. A person from an alternate profession must hold at least a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution and have one of the following credentials or professions:

1. a paraeducator (i.e., a classroom assistant who helps a teacher or other professional staff with instruction or related services);

2. a veteran (i.e., anyone honorably discharged or released from active service in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any reserve component of these branches, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions));

3. a Connecticut charter school educator permit holder; or

4. a person who is employed or was previously employed as a professor at an accredited institution of higher education.

A person from an alternate profession also may include someone who holds a master's degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or, for any person educated outside the United States or its territories, an educational program deemed equivalent by the council.

Under the bill, any ARC program developed or approved must (1) include instruction in classroom management and cultural competency, (2) align with SBE-adopted standards of teaching competencies, and (3) meet other criteria as SDE requires.

On and after July 1, 2019, the bill waives the existing special education coursework requirement and requires SBE, upon receiving a proper application, to issue an initial certification to applicants who (1) successfully complete an ARC developed or approved under the bill.
and (2) meets the teacher certification testing requirements or related exceptions. The certificate is valid for three years.

SDE must include on its website a description of, and the requirements for, each approved ARC for people from alternative professions.

§ 3 — PEAC

By law PEAC, which consists of representatives from various education stakeholder groups such as teachers and boards of education, is required to help SBE develop guidelines for a model teacher evaluation and support program. The bill adds a representative from the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force to the PEAC membership. The representative must be designated by the task force chairpersons.

The bill also requires PEAC to collaborate with the task force to focus on issues concerning equity and closing the achievement gap, as defined in state law. On and after July 1, 2018, the council must, in collaboration with the task force, incorporate into its work strategies and a framework for educators to be effective in closing the achievement gap and in increasing educational opportunities.

§ 5 — 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 by authorizing the executive director to appoint three members, one each with expertise in African American affairs, Latino and Puerto Rican affairs, and Asian Pacific American affairs. Also, on or after July 1, 2018, the task force chairpersons must appoint an additional member who will serve as an additional chairperson of the task force with the same authority and duties as the other chairs. The chairpersons must appoint the new member within 30 days after July 1, 2018.

This brings the task force membership under the bill from 10 to 13.
§ 6 — 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 and requires the plan to address certain things. 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 total population of the state. The current five-year plan expires in 2021.

§ 7 — BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND MINORITY RECRUITMENT

Under current law, boards of education must develop and implement a written plan for minority staff recruitment in order for students to interact with teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation. The bill limits the scope of the recruitment plan from “staff” to “teacher.”

§ 9 — RETAKING LICENSURE EXAMS

The bill requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2019, to enter into a MOU with one or more teacher licensure assessment vendors to provide licensure exams to eligible applicants in Connecticut. The bill requires the MOU to include, at a minimum, requirements that, upon the request of an applicant:

1. the applicant be allowed to retake any exam on which he or she did not achieve a satisfactory score, provided the score is within a range the commissioner prescribes;

2. the vendor assumes the cost of any exam retake; and

3. the vendor provides SDE with the applicant’s individualized score report on the licensure exam he or she did not pass.

Under the bill, “eligible applicants” are those applying for an initial educator certificate who has successfully met the SBE-specified preparation and eligibility requirements, but who has not achieved a satisfactory score on any required licensure exam.
The bill also requires SDE to, within available appropriations, provide, upon the request of an applicant, educational materials to assist him or her in obtaining an initial educator certificate. The materials must be provided using the results of the applicant’s individualized score report on the licensure exam that he or she did not pass.

BACKGROUND

Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council

The council is part of SDE and it 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)