



Testimony of Stuart Beckford in reference to SB 183

My name is Stuart Beckford. I am teacher at Kennelly School in Hartford, and I am also a member of Educators for Excellence. Most importantly, I am a Connecticut resident and tax payer and I want to ensure that every effort is made to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers of color in Connecticut's classrooms.

In my time working for Hartford Public Schools, I have seen the value that teachers of color bring to the classroom. There is ample evidence that teachers of color have long-ranging, positive effects for students of all backgrounds. Yet in Connecticut we have a problem attracting, certifying and retaining teachers of color. I deeply believe in high standards for Connecticut's teachers, and I know that we can remove procedural obstacles that make it difficult for teachers of color to enter the profession while maintaining those high standards. Today we are here to discuss solutions to many of these obstacles, and as a teacher for the last 18 years, I wish to state my support for the following proposed bills.

Under the proposal entitled "An act affecting state board regulations for teacher certificates," we would see the current regulation requiring additional coursework for kindergarten teachers changed to allow for teachers to be certified from Kindergarten to 6th grade once again. I believe this allows for greater flexibility for teachers and for schools, making it easier to staff classrooms and helping with retention.

Under the proposal entitled "An act concerning various revision and additions to the education statutes," we would see a streamlining of the process to teach in Connecticut if you have taught in other states. This change would allow for a wider variety of qualified teachers from other states to teach in Connecticut, while lowering the cost to do so.

Under the proposal entitled "An act concerning state board regulations for teacher certification," we would see greater flexibility provided to alternate route certification programs,



and a lowering of cost for participants in such programs. Right now, if a candidate wishes to teach coming out of an ARC program, they must take their U.S. History and Literacy courses from credit granting institutions in addition to get their certification. This is an unnecessary expense and makes it more difficult for qualified candidates to enter the profession in critical shortage areas. In a broader sense, I would like to see greater levers of due process in areas of flexibility throughout the certification process to allow for a diverse group of teacher candidates to enter the classroom.

Finally, I would like to speak in favor of restoring funding supports to the TEAM program. The TEAM program represents the biggest way that we as a state work to ensure that new teachers succeed in the classroom. TEAM mentors should receive a stipend for their work, and putting greater financial burdens on school districts in a time of budget cuts is not a viable way of ensuring that new teachers succeed. While greater flexibility may be good for the program in the long run, I worry that our failure to support TEAM financially will mean the end of our support for new teachers.

In closing, I support the work that has been done to ensure that quality teachers can enter the profession. I am proud of the core requirements of certification in Connecticut, and of the quality of teachers we have here. I see some flexibility in meeting those requirements as a strength to the overall system. I would like to see more steps be taken to ensure that Connecticut is an attractive place to work for all teachers. Thank you.