



## **Testimony of Ryan Brown in reference to Senate Bill 183**

Chairman Fleischmann, Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairwoman Boucher, Ranking Member Lavielle and Members of the Education Committee: Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 183.

My name is Ryan Brown and I teach in Bridgeport, CT. Bridgeport is a district that has been plagued with position and supply cuts since I began teaching in 2013. Along with position cuts, teacher retention and gaining quality educators has been an issue due to certification restrictions.

Certification restrictions as a whole prevents quality educators from benefitting our students in our state and in my district (Bridgeport). Allowing teachers who are certified 1-6 to be certified K-6 or even PK-6 would prevent our primary grades from becoming shortage areas in all districts with an emphasis on urban districts. When positions are not filled by certified teachers, they are filled by long-term substitute teachers which in most cases means that individuals who are not qualified to teach will be teaching those classes. If there is a separate certification for Kindergarten, a number of positions will remain unfilled and seeing as Kindergarten is usually the beginning of a student's educational career, it would be best to have qualified teachers in those classrooms. On the flip side, Kindergarten teachers who are just certified in Kindergarten would never be able to move up grades unless they gain the 1-6 certification. This means that they will spend more money out of pocket to cover costs for potential certification programs. This also means that positions in grades 1-6 will be unfilled. Kindergarten numbers change from year to year along with other primary grades. Teachers that hold a K-6 certification would be able to move positions throughout their school to account for those changes in numbers.

Long-term substitutes and substitute teachers in general deserve employment so in no way do I believe that they shouldn't teach when they are needed. However, the requirement to be



a substitute teacher is to hold a bachelor's degree. Teachers are required to take rigorous classes geared towards all aspects of teaching from special education to curriculum. Prospective educators are required to student-teach in most cases. With the coursework and fieldwork alone, prospective teachers have experience in the classroom.

In my school, I have seen numbers fluctuate and teachers having to move from grade to grade to account for those changes. However, since I have been teaching we have had quite a few long-term substitutes teaching kindergarten. This means that there is a shortage area of qualified Kindergarten teachers in our district. This is a vital grade for all students. Having uncertified and non-qualified teachers teaching in those classrooms could lead to students falling behind immediately in the beginning of their educational careers. Please allow for teachers who want to teach primary grades to obtain a K-6 certification rather than separating Kindergarten and grades 1-6.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, By allowing me to share my views and story, it proves that you all are passionate about improving our educational system as much as us educators are.