



**Jennifer Ellis, ConnCAN**  
**Regarding**  
**Education Committee, Senate Bill 183**  
**February 26, 2018**

Members of the Education Committee, Co-Chairs Rep. Fleischmann, Sen. Slossberg, Sen. Boucher and Ranking Member Rep. Lavielle, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Jennifer Ellis, I am the Director of Research and Policy for ConnCAN, a statewide non-profit organization that has spent the last decade fighting to ensure that all kids in our state have access to a great public education. Today, I am here to discuss *Senate Bill 183, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education*.

I would like to specifically address Sections 5 through 8 of SB 183, which include proposals to amend the current educator certification system. While some of these are a step in the right direction, they do not go far enough to make needed changes to empower superintendents and school leaders to hire the best candidates for their communities, hold leaders accountable for equity and results in hiring, and allow Connecticut to compete for top talent.

The research is clear. The quality of a child's classroom teachers and school leaders is the top factor impacting his or her success in school. That's why we must ensure that Connecticut's certification requirements are strongly connected to effectiveness in the classroom, maximize our ability to compete with neighboring states for talented candidates, and avoid overly prescriptive mandates that tie the hands of leaders who want to pursue innovative and effective recruiting techniques. Right now, our certification requirements exclude too many well-trained, promising, and diverse candidates from teaching or leading in our state, especially in shortage or in-demand areas.

Section 7 of Senate Bill 183 would take some steps to fix this by streamlining temporary permits for certain candidates from a 1 year duration (renewable for up to 3 years) to a nonrenewable 3 year permit. While lengthening the temporary permit process is a step in the right direction, this proposal does not address a

serious issue, which is that many of the permits and pathways intended to create flexibility for an educator's initial entry into our certification system too often lead to dead ends. Connecticut needs a streamlined system that allows temporary permit holders to obtain full, professional certification if they have proven themselves effective in the classroom and show a continued commitment to professional development.

Additionally, this proposal would limit temporary permits by removing a category of eligible candidates (those who live outside of Connecticut, hold out-of-state educator certification, and have successfully taught for 1 year) and restricting another category (educators holding or teaching under out-of-state certification for at least 2 years) to those who have held or taught under a valid certification in the last 10 years. We do not support any measures that would limit the pool of eligible out-of-state candidates interested in teaching and leading in Connecticut. Our state needs measures that allow us to consider diverse and qualified candidates from out-of-state who have demonstrated teaching experience and subject-area mastery in a broad variety of ways.

Similarly, Section 8 of SB 183 would allow the Department to consider equivalent education in place of course hour requirements in two specific areas: United States history and comprehensive reading instruction. While this section is a positive step toward increased flexibility in the state's prescriptive certification process, this relief is needed broadly across subject area, coursework, testing, and degree requirements.

Our state does not have enough teachers to meet demand in our highest-need communities and in many critical subject areas, such as math, science, special education, and bilingual education. Every year, about 6 of every 10 unfilled teaching positions exist due to lack of qualified candidates. This results in chronically vacant teaching positions, which disproportionately impact our most vulnerable students. Many school districts across the state report they are losing talented candidates to other states or private schools because potential educators have not met coursework, testing, or degree requirements that have little to do with their ability to serve as effective educators. The Department should be allowed to and encouraged to certify candidates who show demonstrated experience and subject-area mastery, instead of requiring specific input-based requirements that do not ensure quality or success in the classroom.

We are also in support of Sections 5 and 6. Section 5 would provide the Department with greater flexibility handle misconduct, allowing the Department to suspend or place on probation a teacher's certification, where previously the Department was only able to revoke certification. Section 6 would expand the endorsement to teach elementary school grades from grade one through six to kindergarten through sixth grade.

Our children can't wait. To ensure all students have access to effective educators, we encourage this Committee to support legislation that streamlines our certification system, prioritizes job performance over input-based requirements, and opens innovative pathways into the profession to attract a diverse and experienced workforce.

Thank you.

