

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-455

AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND

Title: RETENTION.

Vote Date: 3/23/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/14/2018

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to require the Department of Education to take certain actions to recruit and retain minority teachers, amend its regulations relating to teacher certification, issue a provisional educator certificate to certain holders of charter school educator permits, develop a definition of educator effectiveness and issue an initial educator certificate to applicants who have passed a relevant examination or completed advanced coursework, and to revise the membership of the minority teacher recruitment and retention task force.

Sec. 1 codifies much of the work the Minority Teacher Recruitment Oversight Council and the task force have already worked on, including identifying relevant research and successful practices to enhance minority teacher recruitment throughout the state.

Sec. 2 requires SBE to adopt regulations related to teacher certification that limit the number of years of occupational experience necessary for vocational endorsement to no more than five.

Sec. 3 and 4 requires SBE to issue provisional educator certificate to any person who has 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. Sec. 4 makes conforming changes to the definition of "provisional educator certificate."

Sec. 5 requires SDE to develop a definition of educator effectiveness that includes a focus on an educator's demonstrated record of improving student achievement, summative ratings of proficient or exemplary on performance evaluations and methods to demonstrate effectiveness.

Sec. 6 modifies the requirements of granting an initial educator certificate 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.

Sec. 7 authorizes the Commission on Equity and Opportunity to appoint three members of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force (under current law only the CEO executive director, or her designee, is a member).

Sec. 8 requires SBE's five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career and adult education to include a statement of policy that the demographics of teachers in CT public schools should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the total population of the state.

Sec. 9 established a task force to review the feasibility of establishing and implementing an individualized, accelerated program for school paraprofessionals that recognizes the classroom experience of paraprofessionals and provides high quality education for the transition from school paraprofessional to certified teacher.

Sec. 10 allows any person who holds an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate and achieves a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate SBE approved subject area assessment will be issued a cross endorsement in the relevant certification endorsement area corresponding to a teacher shortage area,

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Substitute language (1) removes language (Sec. 2) that required SBE to adopt regulations related to teacher certification that provide for equivalent education, experience or other circumstances that substitute for testing, coursework or degree requirements for persons whose certifications have lapsed or have taught at private schools or out of state, (2) adds Sec. 8 regarding the five year comprehensive plan (3) adds Sec. 9 regarding the creation of a task force to study the creation of a paraprofessional program for teacher certification and (4) adds Sec. 10 regarding certified teachers gaining a cross endorsement in a shortage area upon achieving a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate SBE approved subject area assessment .

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, State Department of Education:](#)

Commissioner Wentzell testified on behalf of the State Department of Education stating support for SB 455 as minority teacher recruitment and retention has been a top priority for the department for the last three years. SDE supports Section 1 that codifies policy work that SDE and the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force have carried out. SDE also supports the language in Section 7 and looks forward to continuing their work with the task force. SDE believes that the work outlined in Section 5 has already been completed by the Performance

Evaluation Advisory Council so they are unsure why it is included. SDE has several concerns about many of the other sections and would like an opportunity to work with the committee chairs to discuss the changes.

Steven Hernandez, Esq., Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS):

Mr. Hernandez testified on behalf of the CWCS in support of SB 455. He stated that as a member of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force, CWCS fully supports the efforts to recruit and retain minority teachers to improve students' equitable education experiences and "feeling of belonging." CWCS supports the provisions which give teachers and administrators credit for their work experience. They also support the identification and utilization of affordable, bias-free teacher assessments as outlined in Section 1.

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO):

Ms. Gordon testified on behalf of CEO in support of SB 455. Ms. Gordon stated that while students of color make up more than a third of the student population in Connecticut, only 7% of teachers identify as non-white. She stated that studies have shown that students are more successful when their teacher reflects their own racial or ethnic group. In addition, "the performance gap in terms of class dropout and pass rates between white and minority students falls by roughly half when taught by a minority instructor." Specific areas, like a provisional educator certificate for certain charter school educators, issuing an initial educator certificate to candidates who have passed certain exams and/or coursework, and including the Executive Director (or her designee) as a new member of the task force, included in SB 455 will further the goal of minority teacher recruitment and retention.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff, Executive Director, The Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS):

Dr. Niehoff submitted testimony on behalf of CAS in support of SB 455 because the bill addresses some of the barriers that make it challenging for out-of-state minority teachers. For example, providing more flexibility in certification for qualified and capable minority candidates "teachers with alternative teaching experiences and those who have not passed Connecticut certification exams" to obtain CT certification by. CAS applauds the addition of new members to increase minority representation, and CAS would like to be added to the task force.

Camara Stokes Hudson, Associate Policy Fellow, Connecticut Voices for Children:

Ms. Stokes Hudson submitted testimony on behalf of Connecticut Voice for Children in support of SB 455 because of (1) the beneficial changes to teacher qualification requirements which will make it easier to recruit and retain teachers of color and (2) the added requirement that a representative from each racial/ethnic group in the state must sit on the Minority Teacher Recruitment Taskforce. She stated that having all the stakeholders at the table will improve the outcome of the taskforce.

Ms. Stokes Hudson further stated that for Connecticut to build a stronger, sustainable, improved economy, all students in Connecticut need to receive the best possible public education. Ms. Stokes Hudson shared the importance of children of color learning from teachers of color by including the following data:

The disparity between the proportion of students of color (46%) and the proportion of teachers of color (8%) means that many students of color in Connecticut will spend thirteen years in school only learning from White teachers.

Research suggests that there is a positive relationship between the academic success of minority students and those students having teachers that share their race. Black students who have Black teachers have been found to have greater gains in their reading and vocabulary test scores. Test score improvements in math were significantly greater in Latino Students that had a Latino teacher than those who had a teacher of another race.

Furthermore, minority teachers have the benefit of raising aspirations for students who look like them. Having just one Black teacher in elementary school increases the likelihood of Black students graduating by 39 percent, and Black students who have a Black Geometry teacher are significantly more likely to take more complex math courses in the future. Similarly positive impacts can be seen on the drop-out rates and college expectations of Latino students who have a Latino teacher.”

Ms. Hudson Stokes concluded that SB 455 will help improve the success of Connecticut’s minority students by making the hiring and retaining of minority teachers a priority.

Jennifer Ellis, Director of Research and Policy, ConnCAN:

Ms. Ellis testified on behalf of ConnCAN in support for SB 455 and offered recommendations to improve the bill. Ms. Ellis stated that students of color perform better when taught by teachers of color yet in Connecticut only 10% of teachers identify as people of color while the student population is 45% minority. SB 455 will help districts recruit and retain more minority teachers which will improve the educational outcomes of Connecticut’s students of color creating a more equitable school experience for all children. In addition, she stated that there are not enough qualified teachers to fill openings in the 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.”

Ms. Ellis suggested the following changes to the bill: In section 3 and 4, ConnCAN would like effective charter school teachers to receive a professional certification not a provisional one. Teachers with a provisional certification must obtain a Master’s degree in order to earn a professional certification. Ms. Ellis stated, “A growing body of research shows, however, that Master’s degrees have limited value as a predictor of educator effectiveness. This section needs to be amended to ensure that no child loses access to a great, committed educator.” ConnCAN would like the sections to be amended to include “leaders and administrators serving under a Charter School Educator Permit.”

Yamuna Menon, Connecticut State Director, Northeast Charter Schools Network:

Ms. Menon submitted testimony on behalf of Northeast Charter Schools Network in support of SB 455. Ms. Menon noted that over half of Connecticut’s public charter schools have a staff that is between 18 and 44% educators of color which is a higher percentage than the majority of public schools. Ms. Menon stated support for the “sensible” changes to charter school educator certification including: (1) enabling educators with a provisional certificate to earn a professional certificate after completing three years of successful, effective teaching

with a continued commitment to professional development and (2) granting teachers the charter school educator permit upon passing the subject-area assessment that the teacher plans to teach.

Ms. Menon asked the committee to include school leaders in the alternative certification route and to provide a path to professional certification which is “time-bound and requires additional coursework to obtain it.”

[Lisa Cordova, CREC kindergarten teacher and President of the CREC Education Association:](#)

Ms. Cordova testified on behalf of CREC- EA and CREC Administration in support of minority teacher recruitment and retention but voiced concern over any provision in SB 455 that would lower the standard for people of color entering the profession creating a less qualified tier of teachers likely to end up in schools where the best teachers are needed.

CREC-EA, CREC and SDE are collaborating to create a minority teacher certification program. The target participants will be recent college graduates who live in Hartford but did not pursue an educational certification. The candidates will be paired with a master teacher for two years; in the first year, the candidate will work full time with benefits as a classroom assistant and then as a classroom teacher in the second year. Candidates will take courses for two summers and after school. Ms. Cordova stated that the expectation is that candidates will meet or exceed current certification standards.

[Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc. \(CABE\):](#)

CABE submitted testimony in strong support of Section 1 in SB 455 and welcomes advice and support from SDE to develop successful strategies in recruiting and retaining minority teachers but acknowledged that the SDE staffing shortage will make this challenging. CABE expressed concern that Section 3 would allow charter school teachers with 3 years of experience to acquire a provisional educator certificate without meeting the same requirements of other educators. A charter school teacher will be allowed to demonstrate “a commitment to continued education and professional development” and “evidence of effectiveness” which in no way matches the criteria which other educators have to master and meet.

[Jan Hochadel, President, AFT Connecticut:](#)

Ms. Hochadel spoke in support of the goal of SB 455 because having a diverse teaching force gives all students role models from a variety of backgrounds including their own. She stated that SB 455 moves Connecticut in this direction, “especially section 1 (4), which seeks to “modernize the process for educators to obtain professional certification by eliminating obstacles to certification.”

On a local level, the Hartford Board of Education and AFT Connecticut have partnered with Relay to certify paraeducators as teachers. Since paraeducators represent the race of the students they work with at a much higher percentage than the classroom teachers, supporting them in becoming certified teachers has an immediate impact on diversifying school staff. After program completion and two years of teaching in the district, the now certified teachers would receive \$1800 to help cover the cost of the Relay program.

Ms. Hochadel included the suggestion that Connecticut's State Colleges create an accelerated, high quality teacher certification program for paraeducators which takes into account their classroom work experience. Participants could be mandated to teach for a certain number of years in a high needs district before having their school loans forgiven. While this might be initially costly, the paraeducator-turned- teacher would immediately be making a much higher salary which would increase the tax base offsetting the cost to the State of the educational program. Ms. Hochadel further suggested that a study be conducted to investigate the financial benefits and costs of such a program. Ms. Hochadel listed the following organizations to review the compiled data and then, if the benefits outweigh the costs, work on developing this type of program: "President of the CT State Colleges and Universities, Education Deans at the State Universities, Commissioner of Education, teachers, paraeducators, NAACP, AFT and CEA Representatives and the Commission on Equity and Opportunity, Education Committee co-chairs and/or members." Expediting the certification of experienced, dedicated paraeducators would quickly start addressing the achievement gap.

Shellye Davis, Divisional Vice President PRSP, AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO:

Ms. Davis spoke in support of the goal of SB 455 which is to increase the number of certified minority teachers in Connecticut, but advocated for an additional group to be included, paraeducators. Ms. Davis has been a paraeducator for 29 years in the Hartford Public Schools. Over the years, Ms. Davis has seen many recent college graduates come into Hartford schools, struggle to effectively teach their students and then leave the district. The teachers struggle to connect with the student population and the students to them. This high teacher turnover rate negatively impacts the education that Hartford students receive. Paraeducators are often from the community they are working in, reflect the diversity of the students, and are successful at building long-term relationships with them.

Ms. Davis would like the State to create a path for paraeducators to become certified teachers. Ms. Davis advocates that "providing a path for advancement of paraeducators to teachers by recognizing years of experience as the equivalence of formal study would accomplish several goals: first, it would reduce the teacher shortage; second, it would increase the ranks of minorities among Connecticut's teachers' and third, it would create a pathway for younger people to become paraeducators.

Therefore, I would like to propose that the bill be amended to include in new Section 1 the following provision:

(9) adopt individualized programs for paraeducators with no less than seven years of experience that recognize demonstrations of competency for certification as teachers and for the evaluation of such applications by the Department of Education."

Ms. Davis believes that an additional positive benefit would be for minority students to see paraeducators from their community work their way into the rank of teacher. It would demonstrate that advancement is possible with hard work. This would send a strong, positive message about the benefits of dedication and persistence to the students at a young age.

Daniel L. Durant, Jr., Union Organizer, AFT Connecticut

Mr. Durant spoke in support of the goal of SB 455. He spoke about the unique challenge of urban districts relying on Teach for America (TFA) hires to fill openings. TFA teachers are usually Caucasian and most leave their school positions after two to four years requiring a new crop of inexperienced TFA teachers to take their place. These teachers get the benefit of student loan forgiveness when their obligation is fulfilled as well as a waiver from the state which allows them to be paid as regular classroom teachers and giving them two years to obtain state certification. TFA teachers fill openings in schools but do not help meet the goal of increasing the number of teachers of color and teachers who commit long-term to the students in city schools.

Like Ms. Hochadel and Ms. Davis, Mr. Durant wants to see paraeducators included as part of the state plan to increase minority teacher representation in Connecticut schools. He stated that in Hartford 70% of paraeducators are people of color, over 50% live in the Hartford community and over 200 out of the 485-member bargaining unit, already have at least a bachelor's degree. Many of these paraeducators have worked in the Hartford Public School system for decades. In their work, they often fill in as temporary substitutes in certified positions which shows they have the skills to take on such a role. While the participants in the TFA program receive special benefits like temporary certification waivers and tuition reimbursement, no similar benefits exist for paraeducators who are interested in becoming certified teachers. Mr. Durant believes focusing energy and resources on creating a pathway to certification for paraeducators would result in more efficient and affordable teacher recruitment than relying on TFA, students would have more teachers of color leading their learning, and these teachers would likely be dedicated, long-term professionals in Hartford schools. An added benefit for Hartford would be the increase in the tax base resulting from the increased salary for these city residents-turned-certified teachers.

Mr. Durant supports the proposal for Connecticut State University's developing a certification program targeted at the paraeducators detailed in Ms. Hochadel's summary above. He would like SB 455 to have language added to include a study of the feasibility and cost of such a program.

Giana Gleeson, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Teach for America-Connecticut (TFA):

Ms. Gleeson spoke on behalf of TFA-CT in support of SB 455. She stated that TFA has 750 members currently teaching in Connecticut; 40% of the 2017 corps members identified as educators of color and so far 50% of the incoming group also identifies that way.

Ms. Gleeson stated that TFA currently recruits around 70 new members each year. She states that this number could be much higher, including teachers for shortage areas like math and science, if there were more pathways to certification. She shared this example: "Last year we had over 10 candidates with undergraduate degrees in economics from top-tier universities- oftentimes with almost enough credits to be math/econ double majors, who did not have a direct path to certification in Connecticut and therefore, went to other states, like Massachusetts, where economics is recognized as a closely related major to mathematics."

Another example Ms. Gleeson shared was of a current candidate, a woman of color from Hartford, "who has a law degree from UCONN and an undergraduate degree from Smith College in Government and Afro-American Studies. Despite all of the coursework and

experience required to complete these degrees, she would still need 9 total credits of basic coursework ... to obtain certification to teach secondary Social Studies.” Because of inflexible rules of certification, this highly educated teacher cannot teach a subject she has great knowledge of in a community she cares about.

Ms. Gleeson stated that “Section 1, Subsection 2a, and Subsection 6a of SB 455 specifically help to remediate” certification issues TFA candidates have encountered. TFA looks forward to working with the Department of Education to find ways to help increase the number of qualified, diverse teachers

Robert M. Goodrich, Co-founder, Radical Advocates for Cross-Cultural Education (RACCE):

Mr. Goodrich submitted testimony on behalf of RACCE in support of SB 455. RACCE is a grassroots think-tank that researches, raises awareness, and advocates for racial equity in Connecticut schools. RACCE supports SB 455 because it “removes barriers to certification and will allow district leaders, who are motivated to recruit, hire and retain more Black and Brown educators, to do exactly that.” Mr. Goodrich stated that the current teacher certification policies are “confusing, unresponsive, and outdated... This bill increases the ability of the SDE to certify candidates that are badly needed in ELL and ESL programs across the state; provides opportunity to a broad range of professionals who have exhibited subject mastery in other professions by accepting their qualifications as a means to satisfy requirements for coursework or degrees; and creates a more accessible as well as reasonable pathway to professional certification for out-of-state candidates already teaching.”

Mr. Goodrich also stated that charter school teachers should be able to attain professional certification in the same way that public schools teachers do. He stated that “currently, some public charter school educators who have been given a permit to teach have limited options to become provisionally or professionally certified in Connecticut. SB 455 does not provide a less stringent path to certification for those educators rather it provides a fairer path to a provisional certification than what is currently available.”

Valarie Shultz-Wilson, President and CEO, Urban League of Southern Connecticut:

Ms. Wilson submitted testimony on behalf of the Urban League in support of SB 455. Ms. Wilson stated that it is important for all students to have positive role models who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of our population. It is imperative that students learn acceptance, tolerance, and respect for all people in order to become successful, positive members of our global community. In addition, we need all students, regardless of race and income, to receive a high quality education in all subject areas to be competitive in a global marketplace so that our economy can thrive. SB 455 will help increase the number of minority teachers by changing the certification system so that it “focuses on the effectiveness of the educator in the classroom, looks at subject area mastery and experience over check-the-box requirements, and that sets our state up to compete for top teaching talent.”

Darryl Brackeen, Managing Director of Outreach, Educators for Excellence Connecticut (E4E-CT):

Mr. Brackeen submitted testimony on behalf of E4E-CT in support of SB 455. He stated that in order to increase minority teacher recruitment, Connecticut has to revise teacher certification requirements because these new teachers might come from out-of-state or be professionals changing careers with relevant experience that will be useful in the classroom.

SB 455 addresses these issues by:

- Widening the range of qualifications that can be considered for certification
- Waiving lower level course requirements for candidates who demonstrate mastery in teacher shortage areas (E4E-CT would like to be expanded to include all subjects.)
- Increasing flexibility in granting certification for technical, vocational and out of state teachers
- Starting a conversation among various stakeholders and educators to develop a definition of “educator effectiveness” (E4E-CT would like classroom teachers to be included since they know firsthand how the certification process works for educators.)

Mr. Brackeen stated agreement “with the call for the State Department of Education to improve its recruitment of teachers of color, specifically to,

- Identify relevant research and practices to enhance recruitment;
- Establish public, private, and philanthropic partnerships;
- Utilize innovative methods to attract talent, particularly in shortage areas;
- Eliminate obstacles to professional certification to increase state competitiveness;
- Identify and utilize bias-free educator assessments;
- Adopt cut-scores that do not exceed multi-state cut scores for educator assessments;
- Support teacher prep that commits to enrolling higher numbers of minority teachers and supports interstate reciprocity; and
- Advise local and regional boards to prioritize minority teacher recruitment through innovative strategies.”

Mr. Brackeen concluded by stating that E4E-CT would like to both support and provide “assistance in creating the space and environment for these conversations.”

Morgan Barth, Principal, AF Amistad High School:

Mr. Barth submitted testimony in support of SB 455 because it creates more pathways to certification which will help fill openings in critical subject areas, in schools in low income communities and bring more teachers of color into education. The bill addresses the reality that many effective teachers currently working in Connecticut schools do not have certification. By allowing them to more quickly receive certification based on proven subject mastery and/or documented results with students, these teachers will more likely remain in Connecticut schools. He stated that Achievement First has struggled to both find and keep nonwhite teachers (although AF Bridgeport Academy has “the second-most diverse teaching staff in Connecticut and has achieved tremendous academic results”) but SB 455 makes changes to the current certification system that will make this easier going forward.

Reverend Abraham Hernandez, Executive Director, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Council (NHCLC):

Rev. Hernandez spoke on behalf of NHCLC in support of SB 455. He stated that research shows that students of color perform better when they are instructed by teachers of color because these teachers better understand the challenges the students face since many of them experienced similar challenges and they have higher expectations for minority students than white educators. Rev. Hernandez expressed particular concern about the unfilled

openings for bilingual educators who are essential in helping English language learners gain the language mastery they need to be successful in all subject areas.

Lourdes Delgado, Director of Faith and Education, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Council (NHCLC):

Ms. Delgado spoke in support of SB 455. Ms. Delgado stated that she knows firsthand how important having qualified and competent educators are in schools because she previously worked as a paraprofessional, teacher and administrator. Ms. Delgado stated that the stringent certification requirements have kept skilled, effective teachers from being able to stay in the classroom. She continued that the exams themselves are a barrier and that the exams do not “reflect the skills required to ensure students learn.” She shared information from a U.S. Department of Education report from December 2016 which reported that “Schools in urban areas had higher percentages of teachers who were not certified than suburban, town, and rural schools.” SB 455 will help address this qualified teacher shortage in Connecticut cities and help ensure that all children get a high quality education regardless of where they live.

Ms. Delgado would like to see broader reciprocity so certified out-of-state teachers can be more quickly hired. In addition, changing the 1st – 6th grade certification back to K-6th would “allow for more staffing options in” high need districts. Ms. Delgado also requested that the “committee support legislation that prioritizes considering equivalent means of validating instructional performance and experience as indicators for teacher certification.”

Carlos Correa:

Mr. Correa, a member of NHCLC with two children in the Windham Public Schools, submitted testimony in support of SB 455. He stated that “this legislation would help streamline our certification system to prioritize job performance and professional experience over a bureaucratic list of requirements. SB455 would open innovative pathways into the profession.” He stated that this bill will increase the number of minority teachers in Connecticut schools.

Jazmine Vega, student:

Ms. Vega, a member of the NHCLC-CT and a student at Southern Connecticut State University, submitted testimony in support of SB 455. Ms. Vega, who is pursuing an education degree, stated that her most influential teacher was and still is uncertified because of “technicalities and testing.” She stated that SB 455 will help create equitable educational outcomes for all students regardless of where they live.

Rev. Victor Gomez, New Jerusalem Church, New Haven:

Rev. Gomez submitted testimony in support of SB 455. He stated that this bill would increase the number of teachers of color and help attract qualified bilingual educators. Creating alternative pathways to certification would help minority college graduates who did not get a degree in education but who want to pursue the career post-graduation to more easily enter the profession. He stated that it is important for children of color to have teachers who understand their culture and their language and potentially have shared family values.

Reverend Albert R. Dancy, Executive Director, Serving All Vessels Equally, Inc. (SAVE):

Reverend Dancy testified in support of SB 455 on behalf of SAVE stating that it would “prioritize job performance over ‘check-the-box’ requirements,” create new pathways into the profession and free up school leaders to find and hire the best teachers for their students.

Reverend Steven Cousins, Bethel Church, New Haven:

Reverend Cousin submitted testimony in support of SB 455 because it creates alternative pathways for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession. He shared the challenges that his wife, Dr. Christina Cousin, had in trying to get a position at the secondary level. Dr. Cousin taught as an adjunct professor at Gateway Community College for three years. She then decided to investigate the procedure for obtaining certification to teach at the high school level. She learned that she would have to take additional classes and take the Praxis exam despite the fact that she has a doctorate degree which qualifies her to teach at the graduate level. Rev. Cousin feels that SB 455 will remove barriers to certification such as these for highly qualified prospects like his wife.

Minister Alexis Lopez Cristo tiene poder y union Church:

Minister Lopez submitted testimony in support of SB 455 stating that it would help members of his community by potentially increasing the number of bilingual certified teachers.

Reverend Carl McCluster, Shiloh Baptist Church, Bridgeport:

Rev. McCluster submitted testimony in support of SB 455. He stated that the following reasons for his support: (1) it will better allow Connecticut to compete for out-of-state candidates; (2) it will increase the number of certified teachers to fill the in-demand subject areas which will help our students be more competitive as graduates; (3) it connects certification with teacher effectiveness.

David Weinber, CEO, TNTP:

Mr. Weinberg submitted testimony on behalf of TNTP, a national non-profit organization that partners with school systems to help them achieve their goals for students, in support of SB 455. The mission of TNTP is for all students to have access to the best teachers so more students graduate from college and earn higher salaries in the future. Mr. Weinberg quoted research which found that “black students who had a black teacher even once in grades 3, 4, or 5 were 50% less likely to drop out of school than black students who did not during the same grades.” “Other studies show that students of color who have teachers of the same race are more likely to be referred to gifted programs, less likely to be suspended, and more likely to achieve at higher levels.” Connecticut has one of the largest diversity gaps having a student population that is 38% non-white and only 7% of teachers identifying as non-white.

Mr. Weinberg stated that Section 1 of SB 455 will help Connecticut recruit and maintain a diverse pool of teachers which is important the future opportunities for Connecticut’s non-white students.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Bob Hannafin, President, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, CT \(AACTE-CT\):](#)

Mr. Hannafin submitted testimony on behalf of AACTE-CT stating opposition to SB 455 because it will exacerbate the achievement gap because the most poorly prepared teachers will be relegated to teach in high need districts, where students need great educators the most. These teachers would not have mentor support since TEAM is defunded. Another problem is that the RELAY program is creating a second, lower tier of educators who will likely find it difficult to get a job outside of urban districts.

Mr. Hannafin stated that traditional Education Preparation Programs (EPP) are uniquely positioned, and have the greatest capacity to address the issue of minority teacher recruitment. Mr. Hannafin suggested “the creation of a matching scholarship fund, which would require university match to access.”

He shared the following list of minority teacher recruitment “promising practices” that EPPs are already doing:

- Diversity Scholarships
- Outreach fairs
- Diversity Dinner, HS clubs
- Programming for students of color
- Diversity leaders
- GYO teachers
- Endowment for minority scholarships
- Teacher Academy in HS
- MAT – competency? Online? Field based? Off campus paraprofessionals?

[Lauren Anderson, Chair of the Education Department at Connecticut College and Secretary of American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, CT \(AACTE-CT\):](#)

Ms. Anderson submitted testimony on behalf of AACTE-CT in opposition to SB 455. She stated that while AACTE-CT also prioritizes the recruitment and retention of minority teachers, they want to be sure that those teachers have the highest level of preparation and training to ensure that the students they lead get the best education possible and that the teaching profession is not undermined by a lowering of standards and creation of a two-tier track of teachers.

Ms. Anderson included specific issues with various sections:

Sections 2 and 6: “Section 2’s provisions for the acceptance of *equivalent* education, experience or other circumstances” as a “substitute for testing, coursework or degree requirements” and Section 6’s acceptance of “a satisfactory score on a *relevant* example or completed advanced coursework in a *relevant* subject area” in lieu of a “subject area major” are similarly worrisome (my *emphases*).” Ms. Anderson stated that this type of provision would mean that students in Connecticut’s urban communities would have teachers who have not met the same standards as those teaching in the wealthy suburbs. Minority teachers with this alternative route to certification could face bias in the hiring process. Ms. Anderson further stated the youth in most need of the highest quality teachers will have teachers who have the least amount of formal preparation and they will not have the mentor support because of the defunding of TEAM.

Section 3 and 4: AACTE-CT opposes allowing charter school teachers, who have little teacher preparation, with three years of “successful” teaching, to bypass the initial teacher certification process. They also question the subjective language of “commitment to education” and “evidence of effectiveness.” Who determines what “commitment” and “effectiveness” actually mean?

Section 5: AACTE-CT would like to have higher education partners included in the Performance Evaluation and Advisory Council which will determine the definition of “educator effectiveness” and also on the task force.

She stated that research shows that teachers from high quality teacher preparation stay in education longer and that school conditions and mentor supports are also key factors in retention. Ms. Anderson included the following list of initiatives that higher education institutions are implementing to address the minority teacher shortage issue: “AACTE-CT members are working in innovative ways to tackle these issues—for example, pairing teacher candidates of color with mentors of color at UCONN, creating structures for employees and students at partner schools to enroll for free in Quinnipiac teacher education courses, securing external funding at the University of Hartford for programmatic scholarships to address access and timely degree completion for members of underrepresented populations, establishing a stronger pipeline through early college experiences at many of our campuses and so on.”

Ms. Anderson noted that there are a high number of Connecticut certified teachers of color who are not employed in schools which might indicate “hiring biases and a popular discourse, reform climate, and salary structure that makes teaching a profession that isn’t just hard-to-staff, but hard-to-choose.”

Ms. Anderson concluded by saying that AACTE-CT is committed to doing their part to recruit minority teacher candidates but need support from the State which keeps raising the standards for their teacher preparation programs while lowering the standards for “alternate providers.”

Mia Dimbo, Bridgeport Public School teacher:

Ms. Dimbo spoke in opposition to SB 455. She stated agreement with the SDE’s decision to make it easier for out-of-state teachers to get certified in Connecticut by adopting criteria similar to many other states.

She had several reasons for opposing this bill: (1) the bill lowers the standards of certification for people of color which she finds insulting because minorities have struggled and strived for decades to prove that they are as capable as white people. (2) She believes that included language that refers to “relevant experience,” “equivalent education” and “evidence of effectiveness” is vague and subjective. Ms. Dimbo does not support the issuing of certifications to charter school teachers with no college-level teacher courses and feels that “business-run charter schools” are trying to profit from this lowering of standards for teachers.

Ms. Dimbo included “the following alternatives to encourage more minorities to become classroom teachers in Connecticut:

- Increase the number of high-level minority decision-makers in the Connecticut State Department of Education to reflect the demographics of the state’s public schools.

People who have the same lived experiences of our minority students will make more effective decisions with tangibly improved outcomes.

- Create satellite campuses of historically black colleges in our urban centers to attract minority students from across the U.S. to Connecticut. For example, there could be Morehouse College (in Atlanta, GA) at UConn-Hartford, where Morehouse students complete the last two years of their teaching program. This could also be done with the University of Puerto Rico and universities in Mexico, Chile, and elsewhere.
- Target higher education support to attract students of color into teaching programs and enhance programs that help them persist to graduation.
- Establish grow-your-own programs that provide community members with pathways to teaching that do not lower standards and give high school students an early start on college.
- Provide housing assistance to attract teachers of color from areas of the country with a lower cost of living.”

In conclusion, Ms. Dimbo stated that efforts need to be made to find ways to retain teachers of color once they enter the profession because this is an essential piece in keeping the best teachers in our neediest schools.

Marta Diez, CREC teacher:

Ms. Diez submitted testimony opposing SB 455. Ms. Diez stated that the committee’s underlying assumption that teachers of color are not capable of gaining certification in the same manner as all other teachers is offensive. While she stated support for the goal of increasing the number of minority teachers in Connecticut schools, she said that there is no need to lower the current standards and that Foundations of Reading is an essential test and is not biased (a test which she helped select and which she passed.) She concluded by saying, “Degrees and test scores do not guarantee effectiveness but it guarantees preparation.”

Reported by: Tamara Morris

Date: April 3, 2018