
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1022 (File 899, as amended by Senate "B")*

AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the State Department of Education's (SDE) Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council (i.e., "council") to develop and implement strategies and use existing resources to ensure that local and regional boards of education annually hire and employ at least 250 new minority teachers and administrators.

It also includes provisions related to:

1. expanding teacher certification reciprocity with other states (§ 2),
2. mortgage assistance for teachers who graduated from colleges and universities that traditionally serve minority students (§ 3),
3. re-employment of retired teachers who graduated from colleges and universities that traditionally serve minority students (§ 4),
4. flexibility in certain teacher certification requirements (§ 5), and
5. removing subject-matter assessment requirements for teachers seeking to be recertified after their certification lapses in certain cases (§ 6).

It also makes conforming and technical changes.

*Senate Amendment "B" specifies that the teacher reciprocity provision applies to all types of teacher certification in Connecticut.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019, except the annual minority hiring goal is effective upon passage.

§ 1 — MINORITY TEACHER HIRING GOAL

The bill requires the council to develop and implement strategies and use existing resources to ensure local and regional boards of education in the state hire and employ at least 250 new minority teachers and administrators, of which at least 30% are men, each year beginning with the 2020-21 school year. The council must do this in consultation with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force (MTRTF). Generally, school district hiring decisions are made at the local level by the superintendent and local or regional board of education.

In the law creating the council, minority means someone whose race is defined as other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino by the federal Office of Management and Budget for U.S. Census use. The council is within SDE and is charged with advising the education commissioner on a number of activities related to minority teacher recruitment (see BACKGROUND).

§ 2 — TEACHER RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

The bill requires the education commissioner, or her designee, to enter into teacher certification reciprocity agreements with the chief education officials for each state. Furthermore, if the commissioner is unable to establish a reciprocity agreement with another state, the bill authorizes her to establish or join an interstate agreement to facilitate certification of out of state teachers as outlined in existing law, unchanged by the bill.

The bill replaces the term “professional certification” with “educator certification” in the reciprocity provision in order to convey that the reciprocity agreements apply to all three levels of teacher certification (i.e., initial, provisional, and professional) and not just professional.

The bill also requires the commissioner to annually report to the Education Committee, beginning January 1, 2020, on (1) the development and implementation of the reciprocity and interstate agreements and (2) any recommendations for legislation.

§ 3 — TEACHER SHORTAGES

Under current law, an applicant must be given certification to teach in a designated subject shortage area if he or she receives an excellent score in a State Board of Education (SBE)-approved subject area assessment for the subject shortage area. This is also allowed for a teacher already certified in one area who wants to teach in a shortage area. Under the bill, the applicant or the certified teacher must be given the certification if he or she earns a satisfactory, rather than excellent, score on the same assessment.

The education commissioner annually designates shortage areas as subject areas where there are not enough available qualified teachers (current examples include bilingual education (pre-K through 12th grade), math (7-12) and science (7-12)).

§ 4 — TEACHER MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

Under current law, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) administers a mortgage assistance program for certified teachers who (1) are employed by priority or transitional school districts (there are 26); (2) are employed by the Technical Education and Career System at a technical high school located in a priority or transitional school district; or (3) teach in a subject matter shortage area, as designated by the education commissioner, in any district. The program offers mortgages at below market interest rates for those purchasing a house as their principal residence.

The bill expands eligibility for the program to certified teachers who graduated from (1) an educational reform district (i.e., the 10 lowest performing districts in the state) or (2) a historically black college or university (HBCU) or historically Hispanic-serving institutions (HSI), as those terms are defined in federal law (see BACKGROUND).

By law, program participants who work in priority or transitional school districts must purchase the home in the same district. The bill does not include a location requirement for teachers newly eligible under the bill.

§ 5 — RE-EMPLOYMENT OF RETIRED TEACHERS

Current law allows a school district or state college or university to re-employ a retired teacher for up to a year without a pension penalty or a limit on his or her salary. By law, this is permitted for a retired teacher teaching for a year in (1) a school located in a priority school district or (2) a teacher shortage subject area as determined by the education commissioner.

The bill expands this allowance to include any teacher who graduated from an (1) education reform district or (2) HBCU or historically HSI as those terms are defined in federal law. As under current law for the existing provisions, this can be renewed for an additional year under certain circumstances.

Other than certain exceptions allowed in law, like the ones mentioned above, a retired teacher may be employed at a school district, but can only receive 45% of the maximum salary for the assigned position and still collect a pension. Any teacher who receives more than 45% must reimburse the Teachers Retirement Board for the amount of the excess (CGS § 10-183v(a)).

§ 6 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FLEXIBILITY

Under current law, SBE must issue an initial educator certification (the first of three levels of professional teacher certification) to an applicant who:

1. holds a bachelor's degree from a higher education institution that is regionally accredited or accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) or Office of Higher Education (OHE),
2. completed (a) an SBE-approved educator preparation program or similar program in another state or (b) an SBE-approved alternate route to certification (ARC) program or similar program in another state, and
3. completed the appropriate subject area major or achieved the satisfactory score on a subject area assessment and completed

relevant advanced coursework.

In addition to bachelor's degrees, the bill requires SBE to issue a certification to applicants with advanced degrees. The bill eliminates specific references to BOR or OHE accredited degree-granting institutions and instead maintains the broader term of regionally accredited institutions and also allows institutions with an equivalent accreditation.

The bill allows an applicant to substitute either a satisfactory score on a subject area assessment or relevant advanced coursework in place of an appropriate subject area major, rather than having to have both in order to substitute for the subject area major.

§ 7 — RECERTIFICATION AFTER CERTIFICATION LAPSES

Under current law (with certain exceptions), if a teacher's certification expires, the teacher must again pass the appropriate subject-matter assessment (i.e., test) for teacher certification. The bill waives this requirement if the person held a valid Connecticut teacher certificate that expired and either (1) taught the subject matter successfully for at least three years in the last 10 years here or in another state or (2) holds a master's degree or higher in the subject area.

Under the bill, a person who has previously achieved a passing score on an SBE-approved subject-area assessment need not pass the assessment again, as long as the education commissioner determines that the requirements for passing the previous test are at least equivalent to the requirements for passing the current test.

BACKGROUND

Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council

The council membership consists of:

1. the education commissioner, or her designee;
2. two representatives from the minority teacher recruitment task force;

3. one representative from each of the teachers' unions and the administrators' union;
4. the Board of Regents for Higher Education president, or his designee; and
5. a representative from an ARC program, appointed by the education commissioner.

Among its duties, the council must advise the commissioner on ways to recruit minority students to enter into teacher preparation programs and how to recruit and retain minority teachers in Connecticut schools. The council must meet quarterly, and annually report the recommendations it gives to the commissioner to the Education Committee (CGS § 10-156bb).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI)

HBCUs are accredited colleges and universities that were established before 1964 with the principal mission of education for African Americans (Higher Education Act of 1965, P.L. 89-329).

HSIs are accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment (20 U.S.C. 1101a(a)).

Related Bill

The Education Committee favorably reported HB 7149 (File 687), which includes the same provisions on teacher mortgage assistance, re-employment of retired teachers, teacher certification credential flexibility, and recertification after certification lapses.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP
Yea 35 Nay 0 (03/25/2019)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 46 Nay 2 (05/02/2019)