Bill No.: SB-1022  
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. 
Vote Date: 3/25/2019  
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations  
PH Date: 3/13/2019  
File No.: 

Disclaimer: The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.

SPONSORS OF BILL:
Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
This bill seeks to address the lack of diversity in Connecticut among school educators and administration as well as ease the reciprocity program among earned teaching degrees and certifications among states.

Substitute language adds the following sections:

Section 7: Allows SBE to award a certification to teach in a shortage area to an applicant who achieves a satisfactory score as opposed to an excellent score in order to broaden the pool of applicants.

Section 8: Expands the CHFA teacher mortgage assistance program to include graduates from 1) education reform districts, 2) historically black colleges or 3) historically Hispanic-serving colleges.

Section 9: Expands the law allowing reemployment of retired teachers to include graduates from 1) education reform districts, 2) historically black colleges or 3) historically Hispanic-serving colleges. This is included so that retired teachers can teach for one year without penalty on the teacher’s retirement.

Section 10: Allows SBE, upon receipt of an application, is required to issue a teacher’s certificate to a person with an advanced degree from a regionally accredited institution or higher education instead of only accepting a Bachelor’s degree.
Section 11: Waives requirement of passing a subject matter assessment for a certification if the person once held a valid teacher certificate that is now expired if they either 1) taught successfully for 3 years or 2) holds a master’s degree or higher in the subject area.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner, Department of Education: The Department is very supportive of this bill and the Committee’s continued dedication to minority teacher recruitment and retention. They are, however, worried that the goal in section 1 of 250 minority educators each year may be unattainable, looking at numbers over the past 3 years. They also recommend two technical changes. They recommend replacing the word “teacher” with “educator” in line 124, this would expand the loan reimbursement program to other support specialists who may not be classroom teachers by definition. They also suggest broadening the language in section 5 so that these grants can also be made available for those who did not pursue education at the undergraduate level but are interested in pursuing it at either the graduate level or an Alternative Route to Certification program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS): CAPPS supports this bill for the following reasons: 1) There is a large need for minority teachers and administration in Connecticut as in 2016-17 only 8.5% of the teaching force were non-white, while of the student population 45.2% were non-white. 2) Increased reciprocity over teaching degrees in other states will also increase our pool of candidates in shortage areas (special education, mathematics and science). 3) Similarly, the candidate pool for administration positions is shrinking in many districts, especially urban and rural areas. Lastly, 4) this bill also speaks to teacher preparation in cultural competency, an essential aspect of teaching.

Subira Gordon, Executive Director, ConnCAN: ConnCAN supports this bill and speaks to several Connecticut districts that have increased diversity among their educators and the benefits of students when their teachers reflect a large range of different backgrounds, races and cultures.

Tim Sullivan, Superintendent, CREC Magnet Schools: Mr. Sullivan supports this bill as he feels minority teacher retention and recruitment is critical to “dismantle long-held belief systems and eradicate bias and racism”.

Dr. Nicholas J. Spera, Principal, Marine Science Magnet High School: Dr. Spera supports this bill and recommends expanding reciprocity qualifications. He believes state reciprocity would allow top talent to teach in Connecticut regardless of where they studied.

Orlando Rodriguez, Research and Policy Development Specialist, Connecticut Education Association (CEA): CEA supports this bill, especially the loan forgiveness program. They also support reciprocity but only if we can ensure high quality educators. They also suggest targeting teachers who have taught in Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Detroit as these urban areas have a higher concentration of minority teachers.
Yamuna Menon Northeast Charter Schools Network: The Northeast Charter Schools Network supports this bill and the committee’s continued focus on minority teacher recruitment and retention. Ms. Menon speaks to the fact that public charter schools overwhelmingly employ higher numbers of minority educators than the statewide averages and testify to the success they’ve seen.

Stacy L. Schlief, Senior Staff Attorney, Center for Children’s Advocacy (CCA): CCA supports this bill. They believe that this bill would give schools and educators the tools to promote cultural awareness and acceptance from a young age, ultimately bridging misunderstandings between cultures.

Shannon Marimon, Executive Director, Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER): CCER supports this bill as there are many social and academic benefits for students’ who share their teacher's cultural background. These teachers can also serve as role models. They speak to the vast importance of minority teachers for both white and non-white teachers.

Maureen Hilsdon: Ms. Hilsdon supports minority teacher recruitment. She is requesting an amendment be added to allow for alternative paths to teacher certification in Connecticut as she is personally finding how difficult it is for an educator who gained out of state certification to satisfy Connecticut’s high educator requirements.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc. (CABE): CABE strongly supports this bill as they believe it is incredibly importance that all Connecticut students have the opportunity to learn from educators of a variety of races, backgrounds and cultures. CABE also supports entering into a certification reciprocity agreement with other states as well as broadening teacher preparation requirements to include culturally responsive pedagogy and practice.

National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter (NASW-CT): NASW-CT supports this bill as there still continues to be a shortage of minority teachers in Connecticut, even though there has been been great progress over the past 20 years. They state that it is important as our population grows more diverse that our education workforce mirrors those changes.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

No opposition was submitted.

Reported by: Garnet McLaughlin Date: 4/8/2019