

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 19-74—sSB 1022
Education Committee
Appropriations Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

SUMMARY: This act 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:

1. expands teacher certification reciprocity with other states (§ 2),
2. provides mortgage assistance for teachers who graduated from colleges and universities that traditionally serve minority students (§ 3),
3. allows retired teachers who graduated from colleges and universities that traditionally serve minority students to be re-employed for up to a year without a pension penalty or salary limit (§ 4),
4. creates flexibility in certain teacher certification requirements (§ 5), and
5. removes subject-matter assessment requirements for teachers seeking recertification after their certification lapses in certain cases (§ 6).

It also makes conforming and technical changes.

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

§ 1 — MINORITY TEACHER HIRING GOAL

The act 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, in total, 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. (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 issues related to minority teacher recruitment (see **BACKGROUND**).

§ 2 — TEACHER RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

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The act requires the education commissioner, or his 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 act authorizes him to establish or join an interstate agreement to facilitate certification of teachers from other states as outlined in existing law, unchanged by the act.

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

The act 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 legislative recommendations.

§ 3 — TEACHER SHORTAGES

The education commissioner annually designates subject areas where there are not enough available qualified teachers for “subject shortage areas” (current examples include bilingual education (pre-K through 12th grade), math (7-12), and science (7-12)). Prior law required that an applicant be given certification to teach in a designated subject shortage area if he or she received an “excellent” score in a State Board of Education (SBE)-approved subject area assessment for the subject shortage area. This was also allowed for a teacher already certified in one area who wanted to teach in a shortage area. The act lowers this assessment score threshold so that the applicant or the certified teacher must be given the certification if he or she earns a “satisfactory,” rather than “excellent,” score on the assessment.

§ 4 — TEACHER MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

By 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 in all); (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 in any district. The program offers mortgages at below-market interest rates for those purchasing a house as their principal residence.

The act 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 act does not include a location requirement for teachers newly eligible under the act.

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§ 5 — RE-EMPLOYMENT OF RETIRED TEACHERS

By law, a school district can re-employ a retired teacher for up to a year without a pension penalty or a limit on his or her salary in (1) a school located in a priority school district or (2) a teacher shortage subject area.

The act expands this allowance to include any retired 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 law for the existing provisions, under certain circumstances this can be renewed for an additional year.

Other than exceptions 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

By law, SBE must issue an initial educator certification (the first of three levels of professional teacher certification) to an applicant who satisfies certain requirements. Under prior law, the applicant had to hold a bachelor's degree from a higher education institution that was regionally accredited or accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) or Office of Higher Education (OHE). The act makes advanced degrees, as well as bachelor's degrees, acceptable for initial teacher certification. It also eliminates specific references to BOR- or OHE-accredited degree-granting institutions and instead uses the broader terms of "regionally accredited institutions" and "institutions with an equivalent accreditation."

Under prior law, the applicant additionally had to have completed the appropriate subject area major or achieved the satisfactory score on a subject area assessment and completed relevant advanced coursework. The act instead 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 requiring both in order to substitute for the subject area major.

As under existing law, the applicant must additionally have completed (1) an SBE-approved educator preparation program or similar program in another state or (2) an SBE-approved alternate route to certification (ARC) program or similar program in another state.

§ 7 — RECERTIFICATION AFTER CERTIFICATION LAPSES

Under prior law (with certain exceptions), if a teacher's certification expired, the teacher had to pass the appropriate subject-matter assessment (i.e., test) again for teacher certification. The act 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

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(2) holds a master's degree or higher in the subject area.

Under the act, a person who 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 his 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 BOR 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 ways 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 educating African Americans (Higher Education Act of 1965, P.L. 89-329).

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

Related Act

PA 19-128 (§ 6) also expands teacher certification eligibility for a designated subject shortage area to include individuals who received a satisfactory score on a subject-area assessment.