OLR Bill Analysis
sHB 7149

AN ACT BOLSTERING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT.

SUMMARY

This bill includes provisions related to:

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

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019, except the provision regarding teacher certification reciprocity with other states is effective upon passage.

§ 1 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

The bill requires the education commissioner, or her designee, to enter into teacher certification reciprocity agreements with the chief education officials of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. It also requires her to annually submit a progress report to the Education Committee, starting by January 1, 2020, on the reciprocity agreements’ development and implementation and any legislative recommendations.
The bill supersedes, but does not repeal, an existing law that requires the commissioner to (1) establish or join teacher certification interstate agreements to facilitate Connecticut teacher certification of out-of-state teachers and (2) create and make available a recognition statement for states with whom she is unable to make or join an interstate agreement. By law, the recognition statement must include the states, assessments, and educator preparation programs that the commissioner will recognize for Connecticut teacher certification.

§ 2 — 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 districts; 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 an (1) education reform district (i.e., the 10 lowest performing districts in the state) or (2) 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 a 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.

§ 3 — 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 HIS 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)).

§ 4 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FLEXIBILITY

Under current law, the State Board of Education (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) a 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.

The bill additionally requires SBE to issue a certification to applicants with advanced degrees. The bill eliminates a provision allowing institutions granting degrees to be BOR or OHE accredited. It retains the requirement under current law that institutions be
regionally accredited but also accepts equivalent accreditations.

§ 5 — RECERTIFICATION AFTER CERTIFICATION LAPSES

Under current law (with certain existing exceptions), if a teacher’s certification expires, the teacher must again pass the appropriate subject-matter assessment (i.e., test) for teacher certification in order to obtain 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 a 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

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).

HSI 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 USC 1101a(a)).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 35  Nay 0 (03/29/2019)