

March 17, 2021

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING**

**HB 6621: AAC ASSORTED REVISIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES**

**SB 1032: AAC VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES**

**SB 1034: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

**TESTIMONY from Dr. Greg. J. Florio, Ed.D., Executive Director of CREC**

Honorable Chairs, Ranking Members, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. I am Dr. Greg Florio, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). For 50+ years, CREC continues to work with our 35 member districts in the Hartford region to provide an array of cost-effective and high-quality educational programs and services. We also work together as an alliance with other Connecticut RESCs acting as a statewide network in the procurement of educational services and resources.

I request that the legislature consider the following adjustments to the **HB 6621 & SB 1032**:

**Magnet School Funding:** Enact a 3% increase for magnet schools grants to sustain Connecticut's high-quality, integrated, regional education programs for the over 39,000 magnet school students.

The state's base funding for Sheff-region magnet schools remained statutorily unchanged for nearly a decade until the legislature approved a 2% increase in payment for magnet schools statewide in the 2019 biennial budget. This increase provided short-term relief, but did not cover the full funding need. The current magnet grant only covers 65% of our operating costs.

Interdistrict magnet schools enroll more than 35,000 students in 85+ schools distributed throughout the state. In 2020-21, there are 40 Sheff magnet schools and 18,690 students in Sheff magnet schools. Magnet schools fulfill a mission to ensure that all students have access to high-quality, integrated education. CREC Magnet Schools have made a significant effort to reduce expenditures through cuts to staff and programming and the magnet school programs have run deficits.

Without additional funding, a greater burden will be placed on local towns as a result of increases in tuition from RESC-operated magnet schools. This year, students from CREC magnet schools reside in over 80 towns across the state. Magnet schools enroll a diverse student population and a large portion of magnet school students reside in Alliance Districts with nearly 50% of CREC Magnet School students coming from Hartford and 26% from five of the major cities and Alliance Districts in the Hartford region (Bloomfield, East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain and Windsor). Without the needed increase in the RESC magnet grant, these towns are disproportionately harmed due to the higher amount in tuition they have to pay to the RESCs.

Please include this important 3% increase in the budget for magnet school grants.

I request that the legislature consider the following adjustments to **SB 1034**:

**Teacher Diversity and Recruitment:** Allocate \$4.5 million annually to fully fund the Connecticut Teacher Residency Program to ensure that approximately 60 new teachers of color are hired across Connecticut.

CREC, along with the RESC Alliance, is prepared to expand this program statewide through a partnership with over 20 already identified districts. In 2019, CREC created a proven method in identifying, training and certifying 26 new teachers of color through our 18 month Teacher Residency Program. As of the 2019-20 school year, educators of color are under-represented (9.6%) relative to the number of students of color

(39.6%) in the state. The Teacher Residency Program has demonstrated early success that should be expanded upon with investment from the state.

While we appreciate the funding mechanism included in this bill, it overlooks the number of current and future partner districts who are not Alliance districts. Currently, 17 of our 25 partner districts are NOT Alliance districts and would be ineligible to benefit from the legislation as drafted. *In lieu of the funding mechanism included in the bill as drafted, we urge the committee to incorporate the \$4.5 million into a general fund line item to be included within the SDE budget for purposes of funding this program annually for all districts.* This funding would support four planned cohorts for up to 60 residents of color starting their Alternate Route to Certification this summer. For more information, [www.ct-trp.org](http://www.ct-trp.org).

For more information: [CREC 2021 Legislative Priorities.pdf](#)  
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