

SB 1034 An Act Concerning Minority Recruitment and Retention

Education Committee

Jennifer Barahona

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Co-Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, and Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB 1034, An Act Concerning Minority Recruitment and Retention

I am the CEO of Norwalk ACTS, a collective impact effort in Norwalk working to improve outcomes for children and youth, cradle to career. We provide data support to the Norwalk Public Schools and just yesterday released a disproportionality and equity dashboard that shows troubling trends in over-representation of students of color in discipline and special education as well as under-representation in areas of academically talented and gifted programs. Sections 4, 5, and 6 of this bill that address anti-bias training and education are absolutely critical if we are to make a difference in these trends that have been allowed to persist for far too long.

Norwalk is the middle of a strategic planning process and I am honored to be a member of the task force working on the development of the plan. The issue of minority teacher recruitment comes up in every conversation. We have heard loud and clear from students, parents, and educators that this is one of the highest priorities for the district. However, recruiting more BIPOC teachers into our district only creates further disparities in the districts they are coming from and does nothing to solve this issue across all our school systems. We must work deliberately and with urgency to create a pipeline of teachers to meet the demands in all of our communities.

I also happened to be married to a public high school teacher. My husband is among the rare group of Hispanic male teachers and I have the privilege of witnessing the influence he has had on hundreds of young people who still write to him years later. Without fail, they talk about his enthusiasm, deep connection and care of his students, and his ability to truly teach them Spanish that has made an enormous difference in their chosen careers. My husband benefited from the Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program in the early 2000s and at the time it was the only feasible way for him to earn a living while becoming a certified teacher. Expansion of programs such as ARC are essential if we are to truly commit to increasing the number of minority teachers and thereby improving outcomes for our young students of color.

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