



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

Testimony of Virginia A. DeLong
Government Relations & Advocacy Chairman
Connecticut School Counselor Association

in regards to

S.B. No. 1034 AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Education Committee Public Hearing -March 17, 2021

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and respected members of the Education Committee, my name is Virginia DeLong and I am a Director of School Counseling and Chairman of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the CT School Counselor Association and the 2020 CT School Counselor of the Year. I am grateful for the opportunity to share testimony in regards to **S.B. No. 1034 AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

As an association we would like to offer support for this bill that addresses the need for more minority teachers among our teaching ranks, so that all students in Connecticut have the opportunity to be educated by people who look like them and can provide our students someone to aspire to. However, we firmly believe that this bill needs to go beyond teachers, and should include other school professionals like school counselors, social workers and school psychologists. Students also need professionals in these areas with whom they can relate.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association, the only professional association for school counselors in Connecticut has been working for several years now to recruit more counselors of color. Our first step was in 2016 when the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) and the Connecticut Association of Counselor Education & Supervision (CACES) petitioned the State Department of Education for an amendment to State Regulation Section 10-145d-556.a in regards to the amount of time school counseling graduate students need to spend in internship. Previously students were required to spend 10 months, full-time in a school setting. The requested change was for a 600 hour, 10 month internship instead, which was in alignment with CACREP Standards (the internationally recognized 'gold standard' for counselor preparation programs, and held by all six of our CT school counselor education graduate programs).). The State Department of Education compromised at 700 hours to be completed over 10 months.

This was incredibly important in the recruiting of minority candidates as well as candidates from lower socioeconomic backgrounds into the school counseling profession. The 10 month internship prevented students from holding outside employment among other things while completing the requirements of the internship and counseling program. Just as you do, we believe that it is important that students have counselors that look like them and supportive adults who can encourage them and their academic success. However, this simply is just not enough. Despite these efforts, the percentages of counselors of color employed by schools has not increased. We recognize that more needs to be done in this area.

Last year, we started a Counselors of Color group through our School Counseling Association so that counselors of color and those that support the recruitment of more counselors of color could come together to support one another, but also to strategize ways that we can increase the number of minorities in our profession.



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

According to the State Department of Education's *Condition of Education* report based on 2019-2020 data there are 527,829 students in CT with the number of minority students in CT increasing. Currently 48.9% of the student population is non-white. Almost 50% of our student population is made up of minority students yet 89% of our school counseling force is white and only 11% are counselors of color.

This bill states that "*the Department of Education shall distribute to local and regional boards of education information that promotes the teaching profession, including materials relating to educator preparation programs and alternative route to certification programs offered in the state, for school counselors and students.*" **This is definitely important, but currently not all students in Connecticut have access to a school counselor, so while the information may be available, the vehicle in which to get that information to students in the most effective way is NOT present in all schools.** In addition, if we want to recruit more students of color into the education profession as teachers, counselors and future administrators, we need to make sure those role models are available to those students in the first place. This is incredibly problematic when some students never even see a school counselor because they are inaccessible due to inconceivable caseloads or tasked with non-counseling activities. How can students of color ever aspire to become a school counselor when they've never met their school counselor or they do not know what a school counselor does?

We need to address the severe lack of school counselors in this state, including inequitable school counseling services for all of our students and dismal representation of counselors of color in the profession. As an association we would strongly encourage the Education Committee to **amend this bill to include** the recruitment and retention of underrepresented educators, recognizing that the need extends to the school community of faculty and staff.

Students need to have a well rounded education that includes having educators in all facets that look like them and to whom they can relate. We must do better for our students in Connecticut as our minority population continues to increase and our schools continue to diversify in beautiful ways.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association stands committed to working with the Department of Education and the Education Committee to strengthen programs that allow for the continued growth of minority educators in Connecticut. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Virginia A. DeLong
Government Relations & Advocacy Chairman
The Connecticut School Counselor Association
860-367-6478
cscaadvocacy@gmail.com