

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SB 1034: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

MARCH 17, 2021

Supporting Testimony from Denise Estemil, resident of Trumbull, CT

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Denise Estemil. I am a resident of Trumbull, Connecticut. I stand as an ally in support of Senate Bill #1034, An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention.

I am a Hispanic woman and the first in my family to have the opportunity to attend college and earn a Bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut. It wasn't until years after I graduated from the University of Connecticut that I realized I wanted to pursue a career in teaching. My love for working with children kept me in the education field over 20 years as a paraprofessional, reading and math interventionist, and a bilingual teacher under a provisional license. I have worked in various districts, such as, Bridgeport, CT, Brooklyn, NY, and I currently work in Trumbull, CT. While working in these districts I had the opportunity to work with great administrators, social workers, and teachers who have encouraged me to pursue my teaching certification.

I was ready to pursue my teacher degree years ago, but unfortunately, I constantly came across a financial wall. I also had the responsibility of a wife and a mother. My family's well being was my number one priority. I looked into programs and attended information sessions that promised to pay for my teaching degree, but it required me to quit my paying job to work with a district with no salary. I became discouraged until I came across the Connecticut Teacher Residency Program. After attending their informational meeting, I immediately became excited. I couldn't believe that there was a program that would allow me to have freedom to work while providing a salary and benefits to complete my student teaching. This was big for me, because I could continue to financially provide for my family.

In addition, I would be assigned a coach to guide, support, and help me unlock my full potential. I saw this as my opportunity to finally obtain my teaching degree, to succeed, to further build my confidence, my skill set, and to be an example to my own children. Regardless of whether I get chosen for the program, this program gives me hope that minority candidates across Connecticut have an opportunity to become role models for students of color, teach diversity and give Caucasian students an opportunity to embrace perspectives different from their own. I support Senate Bill #1034 and hope the committee will vote favorably to fully fund the CT Teacher Residency Program at \$4.5 million annually.

Thank you for allowing me to share my experiences.

Denise Estemil