

## Testimony in support of S.B. 1034 An Act Concerning Minority Recruitment and Retention

Dear legislators,

As a white educator working over 30 years in an urban district teaching students of diverse backgrounds, I cannot stress enough the importance of increasing the recruitment and retention of teachers that reflect the diversity of our students. Greater diversity among a faculty enriches a school in the same way that student diversity can.

I specifically wish to stress the importance of the retention aspect of this bill. Recruitment and hiring are the first hurdle; retention is the most difficult. In schools where the administration does not recognize the benefits of diversity, nor take the time to truly reflect on how to best work with faculty of diverse backgrounds, minority teachers often lack the necessary support that would retain them successfully in their placement. I have witnessed teachers of color being systematically pushed out of schools. On the surface it appears they transferred out, retired, or resigned; in reality, they were made to feel so uncomfortable the best option was to leave a school where they could see they were not valued. This discomfort came in the form of demotions in class assignments for a former *teacher of the year*; poor evaluations and lack of positive recognition for a veteran teacher with track records of excellence, microaggressions against a union building representative, criticisms against a teacher whose first language was not English for poor communication with students, non-renewal recommendations to non-tenured teachers, and lack of support to developing teachers. If I, as one teacher, can list this many circumstances in one district, imagine how prevalent this problem must truly be.

Therefore, the anti-bias training component of this bill needs to go beyond those involved in hiring, and include also all those who evaluate teachers. Additionally, greater differentiation of supports must be in place for new and developing teachers if we hope to see districts retain their new hires who represent diverse backgrounds.

High turnover of staff is detrimental to the learning potential of our students. Students need to feel a sense of belonging and trust with their school community. In stable faculties, students look forward to the teachers they will have next year and the year after that. However, in schools with high rates of turnover, students must take the time to feel safe again with new staff. Furthermore, students who do not feel safe, will not be open to learning as easily. I have seen this period of time last a couple months at the least and a few years at the most. If we truly desire the best academic outcomes for our students, it is imperative that we provide them stable faculties that reflect the diversity of the student bodies they teach.

Thank you.

Carol Gale

President, Hartford Federation of Teachers