

S.B. 1034 - An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Testimony By

Superintendent Sal Pascarella, Danbury Public Schools

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Dr. Sal Pascarella, Superintendent of Schools, Danbury CT.

I write to you today IN SUPPORT OF (**with critically necessary amendments included below**) to *S.B. 1034 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention*, and specifically wish to address the statewide expansion of the Connecticut Teachers Residency Program in partnership with the Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) Alliance, which includes the originator of the program the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC).

The Connecticut Teachers Residency Program (TRP) is aligned with the ***CAPSS Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools'*** recommendation #10 (Attacking Structural Racism & Discrimination) specifically "increasing Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino educator and leader recruitment and retention."

Teachers of Color: State-Wide Expansion of Connecticut Teacher Residency Program

The State's commitment to increasing racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut's teaching workforce has met with some success but not enough. As of the 2019 – 2020 school year, educators of color (9.6 %) are underrepresented relative to the number of students of color (39.6 %) in the State of Connecticut.

The CT Teacher Residency Program launched in summer of 2019, is specifically designed to eliminate the most common barriers to certification for candidates of color. It also equips candidates with the hands on, authentic experiences and skills necessary to become highly effective teachers. In this program residents:

- work for a full year side by side with a distinguished teacher
- receive full-time pay and full benefits
- take courses in elementary education for 18 months at no cost
- are guaranteed a full-time job teaching in a partner district

To further support Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Danbury Public Schools has partnered with Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) and New York University (NYU) to form Teacher Residency programs in an effort to recruit talented individuals, especially people of color and individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force; improve the quality of both new and prospective teachers; increase teacher retention rates; and ultimately improve student achievement. Additionally, the district has partnered with WCSU to develop a High School to College Minority Teacher Pipeline with WCSU, which yielded our first graduating class in the Spring of 2020, and Danbury has also accepted an invitation to join the Educators Rising Academy, a statewide model to engage students in pursuing careers in education which will also assist in diversifying our educator pipeline. These efforts, without the support of the Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention, would be in vain.

Necessary Amendment Recommendations for S.B. NO. 1034:

1. The funding mechanism for S.B. NO. 1034 overlooks the number of current and future partner districts who are not Alliance districts. Currently, 17 of the 25 partner districts are NOT Alliance districts and would not be ineligible to benefit from this legislation as drafted. In addition, using this funding mechanism could strain those Alliance districts that need that support.

In lieu of the proposed funding mechanism, we urge the committee to incorporate the \$4.5 million into a general fund line item to be included within the State Department of Education (SDE) budget. This funding would support four planned cohorts for up to 60 residents of color starting their Alternate Route to Certification during the summer of 2021.

2. It is recommended modifying the definition of “residency program” to ensure that we are maximizing the number of qualified candidates who would be eligible under the bill. In furtherance of that objective, we suggest changing “and” to “or” in Section 1 (a)(3) as follows:
(3) "Residency program" means an alternate route to certification program approved by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-145m of the general statutes or section 10- 155d of the general statutes, that requires participants to complete a residency in which such participants serve (A) in a position requiring professional certification, [and] or (B) in a full-time position for ten school months at a local or regional board of education in the state under the supervision of (i) a certified administrator or teacher, and (ii) a supervisor from the regional educational service center or private, nonprofit teacher or administrator operating such alternate route to certification program;
- 3) Connecticut school districts --with local budgets already submitted-- will not be able to fund this program unless the State allocates monies for the 2021 – 2022 school year. As we plan to offer this program across Connecticut, we are upfront that the residency model requires dedicated funding of approximately \$73,000 per resident for tuition, materials, training, salary and benefits. Many districts cannot add this to their already stretched budgets. While you will see in the CAPSS blueprint, the full amount to fund CT TRP is \$8 million for 8 sites across the state. We are asking for funding needed to open four sites this summer or \$4.5 million to train 60 new teachers of color that does not unduly impact the Alliance districts as the current draft does.

I implore you to allocate this money to ensure that we finally invest in diversifying Connecticut’s teacher workforce and look forward to working with the committee and interested stakeholders to ensure that this is a success for our students and school systems around the state.

Dr. Sal Pascarella
Superintendent, Danbury Public Schools