

Re: SB 1035 AAC THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRESERVICE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS, to cease implementation of EdTPA and create a new state-wide preservice performance assessment for teacher preparation programs.

Dear Honorable Members of the Education Committee of the CT General Assembly,

Thank you for your public service and consideration of SB 1035, a bill that will hopefully eliminate the edTPA requirement for students in teacher training. Last year, I wrote an Op-Ed in the CT Mirror titled "[Teachers in Training Need More Personalized Support and Fewer Barriers](#)". In that piece, I outlined a number of concerns with using the edTPA that cause it to be a barrier to teacher certification and an unreliable predictor of success in the classroom. Some of those concerns include that peer reviewed research associates the edTPA with negative outcomes, the teacher shortage (which will soon be exacerbated by the COVID pandemic) and lack of diversity in the profession are both additionally negatively impacted by the edTPA's costs and scoring design, and my personal experiences indicate that previously successful teacher preparation curricula are narrowed via the focus on performance on this high stakes assessment. Since that piece, the state of Georgia abandoned its requirement of the edTPA, five years after implementing it, as those concerns manifested. [K12 Dive](#) and [EdWeek](#) both reported Georgia's reasons for eliminating the edTPA requirement included diversity concerns, scoring concerns, and costs that had negatively impacted their teacher pipeline. Georgia's State Superintendent of Schools, Richard Woods, issued a statement praising what he called a "common-sense decision" that will help strengthen the state's pipeline of teachers, "Now more than ever, we should be removing barriers that make it harder for qualified individuals to join the teaching profession... The COVID-19 crisis has made clearer what many of us already knew: measuring a teacher's preparation and skill is more complicated than a high-stakes assessment tool can capture. The edTPA assessment served a purpose, but it has become clear over time that it caused unintended barriers and burdens for teachers entering the profession."

As a former public school teacher, administrator, and current faculty member in a teacher preparation program, I care deeply about the training, formative experiences, and ultimately the quality of the teachers in our state. However, "quality" cannot be standardized and when it claims to be, it is often standardized to white, middle class norms. To me, quality rising teachers are knowledgeable in their subject areas (they prove this by taking Praxis examinations), trained in pedagogical theories (CT's teacher preparation programs accomplish this through their mandatory coursework aligned with state licencing requirements), and have opportunities to bridge theory and practice through pre-service experiences (they do this by participating in supervised and mentored internships and student teaching). As in any field, pre-certified teachers do not begin by knowing it all, ongoing support and meaningful feedback is essential, especially for those beginning their careers. If there are teacher preparation programs falling short of these comprehensive approaches to embed theory and practice, the State Department should hold those programs individually accountable rather than possibly harming the teacher preparation pipeline, especially for diverse talent.

More and more teachers are leaving education in Connecticut, this is especially anticipated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The socioeconomic backgrounds of students are changing (including increases in English learners, in students living in poverty, in urban districts, and in students with Individual Education Plans), there are persistent shortages in key specializations (such as Special Education, Mathematics, Science, World Languages, Bilingual Education and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), School Library/Media Specialists, and Speech and Language Pathologists), and some shortages are compounded by co-occurring challenges (ex: high-poverty districts face challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers). So, why then continue policies that further create barriers for our future teachers of color and those from working-class backgrounds?

There is a lack of peer-reviewed research supporting edTPA. This is a fact. Conversely, there is sufficient scholarly concern. Gitomer, Martinez, Battey, and Hyland (2019) examined the technical documentation of edTPA and raised serious concerns about scoring design, the reliability of the assessments, and the consequential impact on decisions about edTPA candidates. A recent white paper by UConn colleagues (Bernard, Kaufman, Kohan & Mitoma, 2019) conducted a program evaluation and found that the edTPA diminishes candidate learning, perpetuates inequitable systems, and applies developmentally inappropriate standards.

The edTPA creates a hyperfocus on a single, narrow measure due to its high-stakes nature. If we want quality teachers, the edTPA is not the way to get them. Rather than the time, energy, and funds necessary to support the edTPA, the state of CT and teacher preparation institutions can co-construct a plan for pre-service and in-service differentiated training to support, and ultimately retain, CT teachers who are entering or staying in the profession at a pace that will support the demand for them. Much like an overemphasis on standardized testing has not narrowed the opportunity gap for students, neither does edTPA for rising teachers. For these reasons, and from my professional opinion, and from the fact that edTPA is widely associated with negative outcomes in the far majority of peer-reviewed research studies, I ask the committee to eliminate the edTPA requirement for our future teachers of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims