

Testimony in support of:
SB1035: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PRESERVICE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
FOR TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS,

Submitted by:
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Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Niralee Patel-Lye and I live in Killingworth. As someone who supports teacher candidates in clinical placements and in student teaching across the state, I have spent a great deal of time over the past four years so that I can support my teacher candidates to the best of my abilities. While I value the importance of making certain that all teacher candidates demonstrate the knowledge and skills to teach all students in real classrooms, I have deep concerns about the impact of edTPA. I have seen student teachers with serious anxiety over the assessment, particularly during the pandemic.

Given that edTPA is tied to student teaching, it adds additional stress to an already intensive semester for teacher candidates. I have seen aspiring educators make it through student teaching and then give up because they do not see the point in submitting edTPA. I have seen aspiring educators of color give up after they have already demonstrated the same knowledge and skills through standardized content area assessments such as Praxis II and Foundations of Reading and through multiple teaching observations based on the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching and the SEED rubrics. This is particularly problematic as we strive to diversify our educator workforce. I have heard students say that they wouldn't have opted to go into teaching if they had known that student teaching was going to be so focused on edTPA. While this is not the intent, the fact remains that edTPA is a high stakes assessment for aspiring educators and it often causes student teaching seminars to be overwhelmingly focused on supporting students with their concerns around edTPA. The focus on edTPA takes away valuable time that could be spent on providing students with discussion and strategies around other important topics, such as engaging families and communities as partners in learning, building deep connections with students and finding ways to value and celebrate their unique assets in the classroom, and providing meaningful feedback that students can interpret and use for future growth, to name a few.

As a nation and as a state, we are seeing decreasing enrollment in educator preparation programs. I have heard many students express concerns over the costs of becoming a teacher, with certification assessments, applying for certification, paying for gas during student teaching, etc. These costs often require teacher candidates, particularly diverse teacher candidates, to work as many hours as possible while juggling what is a full-time teaching load and attending seminars to support them in becoming the educators all children deserve. The financial burden of student teaching semester is a great one and one that results in many students choosing other fields. Now, on top of those costs, we are adding an additional \$300 for students to submit their edTPA portfolios to Pearson, and this does not include any associated costs for revisions that may be needed.

While edTPA has some validity, it is an assessment better suited to beginning teachers. The edTPA portfolio is a snapshot of 3 to 5 lesson learning segment and 1 to 2 brief videoclips (totaling at least 3 minutes but no more than 20 minutes). How are we supposed to accept that a minimum score from this one assessment is an accurate determinant of a teacher candidate's essential knowledge and skills? How can an edTPA scorer guarantee that what is seen in those clips and what is written in the commentaries is what is happening in the

classroom on a consistent basis? How can anyone guarantee that the edTPA portfolio represents what the teacher candidate knows and can do on his/her/their own? Wouldn't a more authentic and meaningful assessment involve consistent, regular by both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor?

I have taught with educators across the state who do stellar work during their formal observations for evaluation. They excel at putting on a show then they need to but what is the point of putting on a show for evaluative purposes when the regular instruction does not engage students or even demonstrates content flaws? As a parent, I want my own children to be taught by teachers who always do their best, every single day, and not just put on a show for their scheduled observations. I want them to have teachers who really know their students and who embed what they know about their students in small ways in every single lesson, every single day.

I urge you, as both an educator and a parent, to ask yourselves who you would want teaching your children: a teacher who engages students in meaningful learning every single day or a teacher who can put on a show when they are being evaluated? As a state, are we sending a message to aspiring educators that we only care about their performance when they are being assessed? Are we doing our own children and communities a disservice by prioritizing edTPA over encouraging aspiring educators to strive for growth and reflective practice consistently? With the adoption of edTPA as a key requirement for certification, our state has clearly sent a message that we value the teachers who can put on a show. If you find yourself saying that you want your children taught by teachers who have the same competencies, skills, and knowledge as edTPA but who have demonstrated these consistently over the course of the entire student teaching semester-long experience, then I urge you to support Senate Bill 1035 and to encourage educator preparation programs to go back to the student teaching observation and portfolio assessments that assessed the same exact competencies, skills, and knowledge as edTPA in a more authentic format. Thank you for your consideration.