
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6879

AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION.

SUMMARY

This bill makes the following unrelated changes in the teacher certification statutes:

1. extends the validity of all elementary education teaching endorsements, regardless of when they were issued, to grades kindergarten through six, rather than grades one through six, beginning July 1, 2023 (§ 1);
2. creates the Commission to Modernize the Educator Workforce and tasks it with reviewing, analyzing, and making recommendations about current statutes and regulations governing teacher preparation programs and teacher certification (§ 2);
3. requires the Office of Higher Education (OHE), using existing FY 23 resources, to expand its alternate route to certification program and hire one full-time permanent employee to administer it (§ 3);
4. allows the State Board of Education (SBE) to issue adjunct instructor permits in the arts (see BACKGROUND) to applicants who hold a degree higher than a bachelor's and meet other requirements in existing law (§ 4);
5. removes the requirement that teacher preparation program participants complete their clinical, field, or student teaching experience in two different types of school districts according to district reference group (DRG) categorization (§ 5);

6. expands the grades for which the endorsement to teach comprehensive special education is valid (§ 6);
7. makes SBE-issued coaching permits valid for five years and allows permit holders to apply for a renewal without verifying 15 completed clock hours of continuing education units, overriding renewal requirements in state regulation (§ 7);
8. allows the State Department of Education (SDE), in cooperation with OHE, to authorize three new endorsements affecting early childhood education, special education, and grades kindergarten through three teaching positions (§ 8); and
9. allows a local or regional board of education to employ someone as a substitute teacher for up to 60 days without obtaining an SDE-issued substitute authorization, so long as the substitute teacher is in the same assignment for the entire period (§ 9).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023, except the provision requiring OHE to expand its alternate route to certification program (§ 3) takes effect upon passage.

§ 2 — COMMISSION TO MODERNIZE THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

The bill sets principles to guide the commission's work; grants data request authority to the commission; and outlines membership qualifications, staff assignments, and reporting requirements.

Guiding Principles

When reviewing and analyzing the teacher preparation and certification statutes and regulations, the commission must follow these principles under the bill:

1. avoid overly broad or burdensome requirements;
2. consider whether intended regulatory objectives may be obtained through less burdensome, nonregulatory means;

3. consider a requirement's costs and benefits, including an analysis of (a) existing research on how predictive of classroom effectiveness each current requirement is; (b) lessons from stakeholders' experiences with the current requirements; and (c) the effect that current requirements have on educator supply and efforts to increase educator diversity;
4. reduce ways the requirements are a barrier to workforce mobility; and
5. commit to developing requirements based on existing research findings.

The bill also requires the commission to develop recommendations for new teacher preparation program and certification requirements after receiving input from school district leaders, educators, preservice teachers, and other statewide education stakeholders. The commission must at least consider the following as part of its recommendations:

1. streamlined, flexible pathways into the teaching profession that are grounded in commitment to educator effectiveness;
2. ways to enable in-service teachers to broaden their practice to meet more students' needs;
3. ways to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for their training experience quality and candidate outcomes;
4. creating a robust system to help in-service teachers continuously improve their practice by supporting and rewarding teachers who demonstrate mastery;
5. ways to support improved data transparency about the state's distribution of teachers and teacher vacancies, along with accountability for remedying observed inequities; and
6. a system in which teachers are treated as professionals and lifelong learners who deserve and require access to high-quality professional learning and mentorship throughout their careers.

Data Request Authority

The bill allows the commission to submit written requests to SDE for data and information relevant to its responsibilities. SDE must provide the data or information within 15 days after receiving the request and cannot withhold it unless its release would violate state or federal privacy laws.

Membership Qualifications

Under the bill, the commission must consist of at least 15 but no more than 18 members. The table below lists the appointing authority for each member and the member's corresponding qualifications.

Table: Commission Appointing Authorities and Member Qualifications

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Member Qualifications</i>
House speaker	A representative of the Columbia University Center for Public Research and Leadership
Senate president pro tempore	A representative of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
House majority leader	A representative from the Connecticut Education Association
Senate majority leader	A representative from the American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut who is a classroom teacher employed by a local or regional board of education
House minority leader	A representative from an educator preparation program offered at a public or private Connecticut higher education institution
Senate minority leader	A representative from a Connecticut alternate route to certification program
Governor	A representative from the Governor's Workforce Council
N/A	Two chairpersons and two ranking members of the Education Committee
N/A	Education commissioner or her designee
State Board of Education	A member of the board
Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy and Oversight Council	A council representative

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Member Qualifications</i>
Commission chairperson (i.e., the education commissioner or her designee)	Up to four appointees, who may be (1) an in-service or preservice teacher, (2) an administrator, or (3) a person with expertise or experience in teacher preparation or certification

The appointing authorities must make their initial appointments to the commission by July 31, 2023, and fill any vacancies that may arise within 10 days after they occur.

The bill requires the education commissioner (or her designee), as commission chairperson, to schedule all meetings and hold the first one by August 30, 2023. The commission must terminate on July 1, 2024.

Administrative Staff

Under the bill, the administrative staff for the legislature’s Education Committee must also serve as the commission’s staff.

Reporting Requirements

The bill requires the commission to report its findings and recommendations to the Education and Higher Education and Employment Advancement committees by February 1, 2024.

§ 5 — STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE BY DRG

Under current law, teacher preparation program participants must complete a clinical, field, or student teaching experience in a classroom during four semesters. The bill removes the requirement that this experience occur in two school districts from certain categories of DRGs.

SDE created DRGs to group districts with similar needs and socioeconomic characteristics, based on factors including family income, parental education and occupation, family structure, poverty, language spoken at home, and district enrollment. (According to the department, it no longer uses this classification system.) DRGs were labeled “A” through “I,” with “A” being the most affluent districts and “I” being the least. The bill removes the requirement that program participants complete one student teaching experience in a school

district from groups “A” through “E” and another in a district from groups “F” through “I.”

§ 6 — COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT

Under current law, anyone who holds a teaching certificate with an endorsement to teach comprehensive special education in grades one through 12 may extend the endorsement to grades kindergarten through 12 if the applicant has earned a satisfactory score on either the SBE-approved reading instruction exam or a comparable reading instruction exam with minimum standards that are equivalent to the SBE-approved one.

Under the bill, anyone who holds this endorsement for grades one through 12 may extend it to grades prekindergarten through 12 if they meet the above reading instruction exam score requirements.

§ 7 — COACHING PERMITS

State law authorizes SBE to adopt regulations that set the qualifications for intermural and interscholastic athletic coaches (CGS § 10-149). State regulation requires coaches in elementary, middle, or high school athletics to hold either a coaching permit or a temporary coaching permit. A coaching permit is renewable every five years after its holder completes at least 15 clock hours of SDE-approved seminars, coursework, or workshops on safe and healthful coaching practices and understanding child and adolescent development. The regulation allows the coach’s employer to submit a written request to SDE to defer the 15 clock hour requirement for 12 months, which SDE will approve for good cause shown (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-145d-423(b)).

The bill adds to state law the five-year validity for coaching permits but overrides the regulation in part by allowing permit holders to apply for a renewal without verifying the completed 15 clock hours of continuing education units.

§ 8 — INTEGRATED AND CROSS ENDORSEMENTS

SDE issues endorsements to teachers who hold initial, provisional, or professional level teacher certification. These endorsements are added

to the certificate to signify expertise in a subject area. SDE refers to additional endorsements received in other subject areas as cross endorsements.

Beginning on July 1, 2023, the bill allows SDE, in cooperation with OHE, to authorize the following new endorsements: (1) Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education Birth-Kindergarten, (2) Integrated Early Childhood/Elementary Education N-3, and (3) Special Education N-K.

The bill specifies that the second and third endorsements listed above are to be added as a cross endorsement as a replacement for requiring full planned program and institutional recommendation.

BACKGROUND

Adjunct Instructor Permit for the Arts

By law, SBE may issue part-time adjunct instructor permits to applicants with specialized training, experience, or expertise in the arts if an employing board of education or regional educational service center requests it. The permit authorizes its holder to teach art, music, dance, theater, or any subject related to the holder's artistic specialty for up to 15 hours per week in certain magnet schools.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 44 Nay 0 (03/24/2023)