



Testimony of Jan Hochadel  
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**SB 390: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER  
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Education Committee  
March 9, 2020

Good morning Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. I am Jan Hochadel, and as the President of AFT CT I represent over 15,000 teachers and other school related personnel. It is on their behalf that I testify in favor of **SB 390: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

A decade ago, I was a physics teacher at J.M. Wright THS in Stamford. My students were nearly all people of color, yet the staff had very few teachers of color. I loved my students and had a great relationship with many of them, but I knew that the difference in race did play a role in that relationship. Though many of my students called me “Mom,” I did not look like their actual mother and had different experiences than hers. They did not see me or the other white teachers they had in every class as part of their community, because we were not. They did not picture themselves as educator in the future; teaching was not a career that looked approachable to people of color. I experienced in my classroom what statistics prove; students of color have better educational outcomes when they are exposed to teachers of color. In Connecticut, that happens all too rarely.

SB 390 is a step to address that issue, and I strongly encourage its passage. Yet it strikes me as troubling that in the year 2020, we are recommending a task force to study which data and experience tells us is a fact: there are significant implications for our young people of color and their communities when we fail to recruit or, as importantly, retain teachers of color. My hope is that the task force this bill would create will show that the need for us to address this problem is urgent, because this problem helps create the achievement gap in education which leads directly to the income gap in later years. We as a state have failed to address the racial disparity in our teaching profession for decades; studies and rhetoric will not change that trend, nor undo the damage it creates. We must take – and fund - bold steps if we are going to solve this problem. I understand our budget is tight this year, but that is true every year. AFT Connecticut has proposed a plan that would bring in ten teachers of color and create a structure to help retain them; the cost is approximately \$2,000,000, or .009% of the budget. Whenever we talk to people in the State, regardless of whom, we are told it is too expensive. Yet we know that an African American boy is 30% more likely to graduate from high school if he has a teacher of color in third grade or before. What is the cost to the State of that drop out rate? What is the cost to

his community? Most importantly, what is the cost to that young man who drops out in part because as a child he faced a situation no white child in Connecticut would ever face: not having a teacher in his most vulnerable years who looked like him?

Thank you for SB 390: AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. It is my sincere hope that the task force develops a series of practical, concrete steps, and that next March I will testify before this committee in support of those actions. Even more, I hope that Connecticut students in the future will not know what my students at JM Wright experienced when I was there; class after class, day after day, of teachers who did not look like them and could not know what it means to grow up a person of color.

Thank you.