

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6879

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION.

Vote Date: 3/24/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/15/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill seeks to address the shortage of Connecticut teachers by providing alternatives for elementary school teachers seeking certification. The bill would establish a Commission to Modernize the Educator Workforce, which would allow teachers with bachelor's degrees or higher to be issued an adjunct instructor permit following specialized training as a certification alternative.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene Russel-Tucker:

acknowledges that this bill would allow for more flexibility in staffing teachers. They note that they are working with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) on an early childhood endorsement to be added to existing elementary certificates. They state that they are currently in opposition to the bill and ask that the legislature put a hold on any changes to the statute as they develop the aforementioned endorsement. Additionally, during such a hold, they recommend offering a waiver allowing teachers endorsed for first through sixth grade to teach kindergarten in the 2023-24 school year.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Educators for Excellence, Executive Director, Daniel Pearson: states that this bill would make teacher certification more accessible and increase teacher diversity. They state that our state has talent available, but the current process to become a certified teacher is too burdensome.

New London Public Schools, Superintendent, Cynthia Ritchie: supports this bill stating that it has been over two decades since the state has updated its educator certification requirements. They state that many school districts are struggling to fill critical teaching positions which ultimately affects the student. They state that this update to the educator certification standards would solve this problem and help provide a high-quality educator workforce.

The below teachers submitted testimony in support of this bill. They state that there is a need to modernize the teaching certification process in Connecticut to make the pathway to teaching more accessible. They state that this bill would help minimize unnecessary obstacles to becoming certified and would address the staffing shortage of teachers.

Hartford, Teacher, Beth Agdish

New Haven, Teacher, Shirley Castro

New Haven, Teacher, Tracy Mayes

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) & East Hartford Board of Education, Area Director & Chair, Tyron Harris: supports this bill stating that it addresses the current teacher shortage by expanding the pool of teacher candidates.

CWCSEO, Children's Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio: submitted testimony in support of this bill.

ConnCAN, Executive Director, Subira Gordon: supports this bill stating that diversifying the educator workforce is only possible through changing the current outdated certification process.

CT Association of Schools (CAS), Executive Director, Glenn Lungarini: states support for the bill and suggests that it include the Connecticut Association of Schools on the established Commission, as the association is responsible for the growth and development of teachers.

School and State Finance Project, Director of Community Engagement, Erika Haynes: supports this bill stating that the current certification process is expensive, complex, and does not assist in growing a diverse workforce.

New Haven Public Schools, Teacher, Paige Sisson: supports this bill, specifically the expansion of endorsement eligibility to include kindergarten. They state that this would have a substantial positive impact on addressing teacher shortages in elementary education.

Old Saybrook Public Schools, Superintendent, Jan Perruccio: supports this bill stating that it addresses the current teacher shortages and allows for a modernized approach to current issues in education.

Connecticut Education Association, Education Issues Specialist, Elizabeth Sked: supports this bill stating that it addresses the shortage of kindergarten teachers. They

specifically note that the kindergarten to sixth grade endorsement provision provides a long-term solution to growing problems in the state's educator workforce.

AACTE-CT, Vice President Cesarina Thompson: supports this bill stating that many of the current certification regulations are outdated. They state that updating said regulations would improve teacher recruitment and retention as well as provide high quality, diverse candidates.

Farmington Public Schools, Superintendent, Kathleen Greider: states the importance of modernizing the teacher certification process. They suggest creating a cross-disciplinary committee that the Center for Public Research and Leadership would be included on, as it would generate more educated decisions when redoing the certification process.

ReadyCT, Executive Director, Shannon Marimon: supports this bill stating that the current certification process is outdated, complex, expensive, and daunting for educators. They make the following requests and suggestions for the established Commission: (1) aim to fully repeal existing certification requirements, (2) recognize the pending shift to a skill-based economy, and (3) submit a quarterly report on teacher certification to the legislature to ensure transparency and accountability.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Resident, Susan Bradford: states that lowering the standards for teacher certification in the state will not benefit students. They suggest that before lowering these standards, an impartial study of alternative potential causes of the teacher shortage should be performed.

College Professor, Linda Dalessio: states that this bill does not promote educational transparency and quality teaching.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz: outlines relevant recommendations from their Blueprint to Transform Connecticut's Public Schools. They recommend: (1) eliminating regulatory barriers, specifically the requirements where that is no evidence of teacher quality impacts; (2) accepting out of state credentials when possible; (3) focusing on the student-teacher experience; and (4) reviewing and clarifying regulations on teacher certification, local professional development, and teacher/administrator evaluation programs.

Reported by: Allison Diana and James Carroll

Date: 4/3/2023