

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1199

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING EQUITY IN EDUCATION.

Vote Date: 3/24/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 3/15/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.

Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Many testify that Connecticut has a problematic lack of diversity and equity in education. To address these concerns, this bill contains several provisions to help support diverse educators and to promote more equity in the certification and recruitment process.

These provisions include requiring the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable enrolled students to gain valuable classroom teaching experience while working towards becoming certified, requiring school boards to submit increasing educator diversity plans to SDE for approval, allowing adjunct professors to gain permits to work part-time for school districts, allowing for certain related high school credit programs, and appropriating funds to certain related programs. This bill also includes a provision that cursive writing and world language to the model curricula for kindergarten to grade eight.

SUBSTITUE LANGUAGE:

In Section 3, a provision was eliminated that enabled the State Board of Education to withhold funds from school districts if they failed to submit and implement an increasing educator diversity plan.

In Section 4, a provision was added that creates a gradually reducing schedule for repayment of the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship if a recipient is not employed by a school district after graduation.

In Section 12 a provision was eliminated that required SDE to hire four full-time employees to administer the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program. This was replaced with the current language that requires the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to reclassify at least four authorized positions at SDE to administer the program.

A section appropriating funds to SDE for the purpose of hiring four full-time employees to administer the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program was removed.

Section 13 was newly added to the bill and replaced the previous removed section.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker;

expresses support for the provision establishing an educator apprenticeship program and for the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program but notes that there currently is no funding for these provisions in the Governor's budget. They additionally make suggestions related to eligibility and recipients for the scholarship program. They also express general support for allowing adjunct professors to work for school districts but note that including SDE in consultation for this provision is unnecessary. Furthermore, they state that further conversations are needed for the sections regarding the requirement for SDE to approve school board educator diversity plans and regarding adding cursive writing and world language curricula. They suggest that "minority" is replaced with "diverse" in bill language* and state that Section 11 is unnecessary.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO),

Children's Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio; supports this bill citing research showing that a diverse educator community improves student retention rates, work performance, and mental health. They also emphasize the importance for students to have role models in the classroom who look like them and reflect their lived experiences.

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), East Hartford Board of

Education Chairman, Tyron Harris; supports this bill highlighting Section 9, which allows part-time adjunct professors to teach grades 9-12. They note that this provision would be beneficial and increase the pool of educators.

Connecticut Education Association (CEA), Education Issues Specialist, Elizabeth

Sked; supports this bill highlighting Section 1, which establishes an educator apprenticeship program. They express their hope that the participation guidelines for the apprenticeship program will be as diverse as possible. They suggest that the online credit recovery programs in Section 11 be approved by the Commissioner of Education are modeled upon traditional course settings.

ConnCAN, Executive Director and Parent Advocate, Subira Gordon and Ramon Garcia;

support this bill stating that Connecticut schools will struggle to become more equitable without significant progress in diversifying the education workforce. They note that the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program would fix disparities and provide students with opportunities to be educators, which they may not have been able to afford pursuing. They express their hope that this program is funded properly.

Connecticut School Counselor Association, Government Relations & Advocacy

Chairman, Virginia DeLong; supports this bill but recommends that the Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program should also include funding for aspiring school counselors to increase diversity within this field as well. They note that while school counselors support all students, it would be highly beneficial for some students to have counselors that they can more closely identify with.

CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG), Associate Director, Liz Dupont-Diehl; supports this bill.

However, they recommend inclusions that would establish a benchmark for teacher salaries and create an educator bill of rights.

National Education Association (NEA), Teaching Fellow, Faith Sweeny; supports this bill

but suggests that the language be amended to replace the usage of the word "minority" to describe racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse groups of people *. They express that the word "minority" has a negative connotation *.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), Director of Equity & Inclusion, Kevin

Walton; supports this bill stating that it will help solve the teacher shortage crisis. They emphasize the importance of removing barriers that prevent teachers from getting their certification, especially after the pandemic.

Waterbury Board of Education, Commissioner, Elizabeth Brown; supports this bill stating

that retaining a diversified workforce is an important aspect of education. They note that Waterbury has invested in similar programs as what is proposed in this bill.

Ledyard High School, Students, Amani Dudley-Lamar and Jamel Kearse; support this

bill emphasizing the importance of increasing teacher diversity to inspire students and provide different perspectives. They note that many diverse teaching candidates may not be able to afford pursuing the path to become educators.

One person submitted testimony anonymously in support of this bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), Associate Professor, Michael Bartone;

opposes this bill stating that its proposed programs will be ineffective. They emphasized the importance and complexity of teacher preparation programs. They express that this certification process should not be expedited, as it will ultimately cause an increase in burnout.

Connecticut Republican Assembly, President, Anne Manusky; opposes this bill stating that it does not address parent concerns regarding Common Core, critical race theory, social-emotional learning, or comprehensive sexuality education. They assert that these issues have contributed to declining enrollment in Connecticut public schools over the past decade.

Nicholas Coppola; opposes this bill stating that the hiring of educators should be based upon the passion and character of the candidates rather than efforts to increase diversity. However, they express support for the provisions that add cursive writing and world language to the K-8 model curriculum.

Susan Bradford; opposes this bill stating that diversity in schools should not be forced and that educator hiring should be based on teacher qualifications.

Linda Dalessio; opposes this bill asserting that it bypasses education requirements at the federal level.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:

Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz; expresses support for the proposed educator diversity programs and recommended that the committee rename it as the “Aspiring Educators Diversity Program.”* They also advise against adding cursive writing and world languages to the K-8 model curriculum, noting that cursive is already being taught and that there is a shortage of world language teachers. Additionally, they express support for the educator apprenticeship program but suggested that details be more fully identified. Finally, they state that more details are needed regarding the provisions allowing part-time adjunct college professors to teach in high schools.

**The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education – Connecticut Chapter (AACTE-CT), Vice President, Cesarina Thompson; suggests that the educator preparation programs offered by private colleges and universities be included in the proposed SDE educator apprenticeship program. They express support for the compensation provisions outlined in Section 1, as well as the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program provisions detailed in Section 4 of this bill.

Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), President, Jennifer Widness; expressed support for Section 1 of the bill establishing an educator apprenticeship initiative. They also recommend amending the language to enable SDE to partner with both public and private higher education institutions for the purpose of establishing apprenticeship opportunities in Connecticut.

Reported by: Alyssa Carroll

Date: 4/11/2023