



**Connecticut Education Association**  
Capitol Place, Suite 500  
21 Oak Street, Hartford, CT 06106  
860-525-5641 • 800-842-4316 • www.cea.org  
An affiliate of the National Education Association

**Policy, Research, & Government Relations**  
Ray Rossomando, Director  
Capitol Place, Suite 500  
21 Oak Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(860) 525-5641, 800-842-4316  
Fax: (860) 725-6323

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**Comments from  
Orlando Rodriguez  
Connecticut Education Association**

**Before the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus  
February 19, 2019  
Re: Minority Teacher Recruitment & Retention**

Good afternoon Representative McGee, Representative Reyes, and members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus. My name is Orlando Rodriguez. I serve as the Research and Policy Development Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) and as our organization's chief economist. CEA is the largest teachers' union in Connecticut, representing tens of thousands of active and retired teachers. CEA's Legislative Commission, which is composed of active and retired teachers, informs our legislative priorities.

In Connecticut, nearly four out of ten students in K-12 are either Black or Hispanic; however, fewer than one out of ten teachers are either Black or Hispanic.<sup>1</sup> We need several thousand more minority teachers to get to the level where the minority teacher population mirrors the minority student population. Getting there is going to take time, and we must be certain to identify both the root cause for the shortage and effective remedies.

You may be aware that we also have a shortage of teachers in science, math, and bilingual education, among other areas.<sup>2</sup> Are you aware that we have a surplus of elementary teachers? There are over 1,100 teachers certified to teach elementary school who are not working as teachers. Of these, 178 are minority teachers. One out of four of minority certified-teachers who are not working as a teacher are elementary teachers. We should first work on getting these individuals certified in another subject area to get them in the classroom. Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to recruit recent graduates and experienced teachers from northern cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee.

In 2016-2017, colleges and universities in Connecticut awarded more than 600 initial elementary certifications.<sup>3</sup> The state's private colleges and universities account for most of these new graduates. More elementary-certified individuals are *not* working as teachers than the number of annual graduates in elementary education. Because of this surplus, prospective K-12 teachers must be informed before they enter a K-12 education program of both surplus and shortage areas. This will start to guide minority teachers into subject areas where they are more likely to get a job.

There are several obstacles to increasing the number of minority teachers. Teaching is no longer viewed as a desirable profession when compared to other career opportunities for college graduates. Aside from instruction, teachers have to deal with violence in their classrooms, burdensome administrative tasks, and having to dedicate too much classroom time to meet strict testing requirements. Making

matters worse, our teachers' pensions are under attack even though teachers made all the necessary contributions, but the state did not.

CEA looks forward to collaborating with the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus to get more minorities into the classroom with high-quality professional credentials similar to all certified classroom teachers. To this end, this testimony includes a list of recruitment and retention ideas, from CEA, that seek to attract more minorities into teaching while elevating the status of the profession. We hope they can inspire further discussion.

We thank you for your time and interest.

## Minority teacher Recruitment – Potential Approaches

1. **Early Identification** of HS students for careers as teachers.
2. Provide **HS Intro to Education courses** eligible for early college credit through the Early Education Experience (ECE) offered by UConn. Requires more teachers to be trained for ECE certification
3. Develop model **Grow-Your-Own programs** that provide community members with pathways to teaching that do not lower standards.
4. **Community College Pathways** from 2-year programs to 4-year programs.
5. **Consistent marketing strategy** and public awareness campaign guided by MTR committees, NAACP, and associations. Teachers of Color **Summits and Recruitment Fairs** with associations
6. **Partner to create satellite HBCU campuses** of Historically Black Colleges in our urban centers to attract minority students from across the U.S. to Connecticut. For example, there could be Morehouse University (in Atlanta, GA) at UConn-Hartford where Morehouse students complete the last two years of their teaching program. This could also be done with the University of Puerto Rico and universities in Mexico, Chile, etc.
7. **Student teaching stipends** for low-income students to offset tuition and living costs of these long unpaid internships.
8. **Other Financial Aid** – Tie incentives to goal of promoting staff diversity, especially in districts where there is a discrepancy between student populations and faculty racial composition. Loan forgiveness based on income and limit to low income towns.
9. **Targeted academic assistance and Praxis prep** -- Subsidize test prep as well the costs of Praxis and other tests; partner with higher education to attract students of color into teaching programs and enhance programs that help them persist to graduation. Can the Set-aside program be tapped for this?
10. **Include racial and ethnic designations as shortage areas**
11. **Expand and support state recruitment efforts** to existing teachers and new graduates from northern cities/universities with a significant population of minority teachers. For example, this could include Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, etc.
12. **Certification and Careers in Teaching Counseling** – To help candidates, including from other states and countries, to navigate courses and requirements
13. **Provide housing assistance** to attract teachers of color from areas of the country with a lower cost of living.
14. **Induction and Mentoring** – Innovative residency programs, or a TEAM component addressing school culture and cultural competency at the staff level.
15. **Teacher Preparation Mentoring** – Create program pairing active teachers with college students who are seeking or pursuing a career in teaching. Mentors could be academic/pedagogical mentors too, helping students build teaching skills, and to be better prepared for clinical experiences and Praxis II
16. **Institutional Culture and climate** – Enhance cultural competency training and provide resources for institutional reviews of policies that can make schools be more welcoming to staff of color.

17. Increase the number of **high-level minority decision-makers** in the Connecticut State Department of Education to reflect the demographics of the state’s public schools. People who have the same lived experiences of our minority students will make more effective decisions with tangibly improved outcomes.
18. Explore the efficacy and potential restoring of the **Minority Teacher Incentive and Minority Advancement Programs** administered by OHE.
19. Provide tuition waivers in 4-yr programs for courses required to obtain **bilingual certification**.
20. Allow teachers in Alliance Districts to **exclude earnings from state income taxes**.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut State Board of Education. (2018, August 8). CSDE Annual Report Pursuant to Public Act 16-41.

<sup>2</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Shortage Areas*. Retrieved February 19, 2019, from Connecticut State Department of Education: [https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Talent\\_Office/Talent-Office-home-page/Shortage-Areas](https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Talent_Office/Talent-Office-home-page/Shortage-Areas)

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). Title II Overview. Retrieved January 25, 2019, from Connecticut State Department of Education: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Certification/Title-II>