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Testimony of
Orlando Rodriguez
Connecticut Education Association
Before the
Education Committee
March 13, 2019

Re:
[SB 1020 AAC SCHOOL EQUITY](#)
[SB 1022 AAC MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION](#)
[HB 7149 AA BOLSTERING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT](#)

CEA supports SB 1020, SB 1022, and HB 7149

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Orlando Rodriguez. I serve as the Research and Policy Development Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association, which is the largest teachers' union in Connecticut, representing active and retired teachers across the state who inform our legislative priorities.

CEA supports SB 1020, SB 1022, and the Governor's bill HB 7149. We believe these bills are positive steps toward making our public schools a place where all students, regardless of cultural background, feel welcomed, can focus on learning, and are valued as important contributors to our country's future.

SB 1020

CEA generally supports the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy and practice into teacher professional development. We also ask the committee to consider ways to more comprehensively ensure that cultural awareness and responsiveness become integral to a school's positive culture and climate.

The state has several K-12 statutory requirements for sometimes overlapping topics such as cultural awareness, implicit bias, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed instruction. All of these are effective and relevant approaches now, and for the future, so their importance must not diminish over time.

As the list of such required areas of training grows, we become concerned that promising approaches like these risk becoming compliance-driven – “check-the-box” requirements – rather than cultural shifts woven into the curriculum through meaningful professional learning. For this reason, we also suggest a comprehensive review of how such requirements can be coordinated to better ensure whole-school adoption of these approaches.

SB 1022 & HB 7149

CEA strongly supports proposals that increase minority teacher recruitment and retention. Proposals that provide incentives such as the home mortgage assistance provision in Governor Lamont's bill (HB 7149), and the loan forgiveness program in the committee's bill, are very promising.

We understand that issues of certification reciprocity could be improved to connect more skilled teachers from other states or regions. We support reciprocity, provided we can assure high-quality. Standards for certification in any reciprocal state or territory should be comparable to Connecticut's. Lax certification policies that enable insufficiently-qualified school employees in one state to receive certification should not be an avenue to certification in ours.

In addition, we support the committee's proposal to involve the Minority Teacher Policy Oversight Council in developing strategies to encourage 250 minority teachers to join faculties each year in Connecticut schools. This is an encouraging goal that invites innovation. In fact, from some of our recent research, CEA has been developing potential strategies, which we are pleased to share with the committee (see end of testimony). As a member of the proposed council, CEA would look forward to working with colleagues to discuss innovative ideas and identify potential new strategies for meeting the legislation's goals.

Lastly, targeting reciprocity to the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine helps assure high-standards, but the minority population of these states is low compared to other potential regions for recruitment. We suggest recruitment of minority teachers should also target working teachers with at least five years of classroom teaching in cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Detroit. These urban areas have a high concentration of minorities and weather that will not make Connecticut winters a shock – Bridgeport winters are much more forgiving than Chicago's.

We thank you for all the time you spend on this committee and for your interest in improving educational outcomes for all students in Connecticut.

Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention (MTRR) – Potential Approaches

1. **Early Identification** of high school students for careers as teachers.
2. Provide **high school 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 high school students with pathways to teaching that do not lower standards. This also supports community development by enabling students to be employed as professionals in their communities.
4. **Community College Pathways** from 2-year programs to 4-year programs.
5. **Consistent marketing strategy** and public awareness campaign guided by MTRR committees, NAACP, and associations. Teachers of Color **Summits and Recruitment Fairs** with associations
6. **Partner to create satellite campuses of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** 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 Teacher Educator and Mentoring (TEAM) program 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**.