

Written Testimony of

Tom Nicholas, Vice President

Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

Re:

SB 1022 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention
HB 7149 AA Bolstering Minority Teacher Recruitment

March 13, 2019

Good evening Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Tom Nicholas and I am the Vice President of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA is Connecticut's largest teachers' union, representing active and retired teachers across the state.

We support proposals in SB 1022 and HB 7149 that promote innovative approaches to the recruitment and retention of teachers of color for Connecticut. CEA is excited about the opportunity to share the work it has been doing on this goal and to engage in the development of additional innovative strategies.

On behalf of CEA, I recently applied for, and won, a grant to duplicate a successful "Grow Your Own" minority teacher recruitment program in more school districts. The model in our grant is based on West Hartford's "Future Educators of Diversity Club" headed by CEA member, Lara White. Through partnerships with teacher preparation institutions, the program will help connect high school students to early college credit courses in foundations of education. The program will also provide other support and resources to help create a pipeline of teachers of color from Connecticut's communities.

There is much we can learn from programs like West Hartford's and much we can accomplish by duplicating what works.

Additionally, I know there are many initiatives in high schools and colleges throughout the state, therefore, I am excited about a clearinghouse program that the State Department of Education will be launching soon. This will allow any group to upload efforts to address minority teacher recruitment and retention. Together with the work of the Minority Teacher Oversight Council proposed in the committee's bill, there is an exciting opportunity for innovation on this forefront. I would further like to add that there are currently 588 certified teachers of color in the state who do not currently have jobs. This leads me to believe that districts must examine their hiring

practices. They can start by participating in unconscious bias workshops (such as those offered by CEA's Professional Learning Academy) and promote cultural awareness to help address problems of institutional bias that continue to persist to this day.

Thank you very much.