

Testimony submitted by: Sean M. Mosley

Waterbury Teacher

Before the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus

February 19, 2019

RE: Issues of Concern for CT Educators of Color

Chairman McGee, Vice Chairman Reyes, members of this most distinguished caucus,

I come before you today as not only an educator in the state of Connecticut for more than a decade, but as a concerned teacher of color who has spent his entire professional career working in communities of color helping to improve the lives of all.

My name is Sean Mosley and I am a PROUD public-school teacher in Waterbury, Connecticut. I also serve as the Chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Commission for the Connecticut Educators Association. EMAC, as we are known, promotes awareness of ethnic minority issues in public education and encourages the development of organizational strategies to address those issues. EMAC staunchly supports the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority educators and promotes ethnic minority involvement at all levels of CEA.

While there are many of issues that I would like to address with you, we come here today focused on three particular issues: classroom safety and school climate, building conditions, and minority teacher recruitment and retention.

Many of us work in schools where school climate and discipline have become issues which now resonate beyond the bounds of the classroom. Today we have schools where, on any given day, teachers and students may face bullying, battery, assault or even worse a planned-mass shooting. We are also faced with the reality that many of our schools are in dire need of building repairs, especially antiquated HVAC and plumbing systems and, as we are often forced to teach and learn in arctic-like temperatures while drinking water that is contaminated. This is NOT ACCEPTABLE and we should not become numb to these revelations.

It's up to us all here today as educators, concerned community members, governmental officials, and legislators to pass sound, reasoned, sensible, fair, and cost-effective legislation that helps to promote the safety and well-being of our students as well as our colleagues on the ground and on the front lines.

It is also important for us to pass legislation that promotes and supports the jobs that our teachers and administrators are called to do every single day. We cannot afford to have our educators walking into environments where on any given day THEY may also be bullied, battered, assaulted, or become the victim of long-term, debilitating health conditions due to harmful building conditions.

Despite what many advocacy groups have asserted, as educators of color, it is not our intent to proliferate the school-to-prison pipeline or advocate for measures that would disproportionately affect students who look like us or come from communities where many of us live, but it is rather to promote legislation that promotes safety in ALL districts and prevents another child or adult from being the victim of an assault, bullying or some other yet unknown harm.

Lastly, we must also insist that Connecticut is doing all that it can to make sure that we have a teacher core that is representative of the students we service. We must promote measures that promote funding for grow-your-own teacher recruitment programs, provide incentives for students of color to pursue majors in education, and provide mentoring and supportive programs for teachers of color who are currently serving in one of Connecticut's public schools. We also must make sure that any work group or task force that is targeting this issue includes ACTIVE CLASSROOM TEACHERS who are on the front lines every day.

In deliberating as a caucus, do not just consider the testimony of the concerned educators who are on the ground every day fighting to make sure our students have the tools they need to learn and grow, but also consider that parent... that grandparent... that guardian... or that family member who sends their loved one off to OUR Connecticut schools each day only to wish they return home without any harm, injury, or peril.

Today, I strongly encourage you to think critically about the aforementioned issues and encourage your colleagues to support HB 7110 and other legislation that promotes a positive, safe climate for staff and students, alike.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean M. Mosley

Chair, Ethnic Minority Affairs Commission, Connecticut Educators Association