

Testimony of
Kathrine Grant
Before the Education Committee

**Re: HB 5376, An Act Concerning the Implementation of edTPA as Part of
Educator Preparation Programs**

March 6, 2020

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Kathrine Grant, and I serve as the President of CEA's Aspiring Educators Program and I am a Master's student at the University of Connecticut studying Curriculum and Instruction. I completed my undergraduate degrees in English and secondary English education, and I student taught during Spring 2019.

I am writing to you in favor of Raised Bill No. 5376, An Act Concerning the Implementation of edTPA as Part of Educator Preparation Programs.

I have grave concerns about the implementation of edTPA and the effects that it will have on the future of teaching within the state—and the students that are in the classrooms of student teachers evaluated by edTPA. I especially have significant concerns about the impact of this assessment on the continued efforts that are being made to recruit diverse, well-qualified, and committed educators to the profession.

My experience with edTPA was that it was narrowing to the student teaching experience and required me to teach to a test. The inclusion of this "lesson sequence" into my teaching practice forced me to change the style of teaching I had developed to best suit the learners in my classroom in order to adhere to what would be rated "highly" by an outside observer. The "lesson sequence" I had to teach for this test felt artificial to both the content of my teaching and the culture I had created in my classroom. The standardized requirements of edTPA negated and minimized the diversity of learners in my classes, from exceptional learners to special education students and students learning English as an additional language. Completing my edTPA lessons distilled my teaching into what felt like teaching to the test in duplicate: I had to teach to a test that I was being assessed on, and so my students had to be taught in a way that aligned with that as well. As an educator, I believe that high-stakes standardized assessments are harmful to my students; the use of edTPA is the same testing experience for teacher candidates.

Emerging and previous research tells us what I experienced firsthand: that this is an unreliable, invalid measure that poses undue and harmful burdens on teacher candidates with very little benefit.

As a pre-service educator, I paid for: a subscription to a portfolio system; a fully professional wardrobe; transportation to and from my clinical, student teaching, and master's internship locations; an application to graduate school; three different rounds of fingerprinting; certification testing; and not working for an entire semester—plus edTPA. This can be conservatively summed at \$1,300, which is a considerable amount of money for anyone, especially a tuition-paying college student. This is the financial reality of becoming a teacher in this state. Compared to all other New England states and New York, Connecticut is currently the most expensive state in which to become a teacher. I believe that we are rapidly approaching a point in which the costs associated with becoming a teacher, as well as the financial reality we face in the profession, are going to begin preventing individuals from pursuing what I consider the most important of professions. If we are committed to diversifying who teaches students in Connecticut classrooms, we cannot be creating more barriers. edTPA will do that.

I loved every minute of student teaching; it was so empowering to be able to put everything that I have learned into practice, to develop relationships with students, and to learn and grow as an educator and as an individual. But, being required to complete edTPA took away from my experience and negatively affected the teacher that I was becoming—which harmed my students. The stress of edTPA took away from my ability to show up as the best educator I could be for my students.

I lost sleep, I spent hours working on this portfolio that I could have instead spent on lesson preparation, and I was constantly burdened by the chronic stress of completing this portfolio. It was so frustrating to know that I had to dedicate time to completing a portfolio that would only provide me with scripted, rubric-based feedback instead of investing even more deeply in reflecting on my practice with my cooperating teacher, university supervisor, department head, professors, or advisors—all individuals who know me and have known my growth over the many years I have spent preparing to become an educator.

I am the highly-qualified teacher candidate that this state seeks to prepare through every institution and every program: please hear me when I say that this test did not allow me to accurately represent the training I have received and it harmed my students in the process. edTPA does not measure my ability to console a student in crisis who was struggling with intimate partner violence. edTPA does not measure my ability to build a relationship with a student that changed his academic experience and self-confidence for the better. edTPA does not measure my ability to bring innovative practices and texts into the classroom in order to best meet the needs of diverse, 21st century learners and inspire civic action in them. These are all things I did during student teaching that were not reflected, and could not be reflected, in my edTPA portfolio.

Some will say that the argument against the use of this testing measure is that we are afraid of being held to a high standard or that we misunderstand the test or why it is “important.” I have no issue with being held to a high standard as a teacher candidate—in fact, I want to be held to the highest standard because I know that I am going to have the responsibility of students' futures in my hands. But the feedback that this assessment provides did nothing to support my development as a future

educator and took away from my overall experience and my ability to show up as the best educator I could be for my students. The feedback that I received from my university supervisor, from my professors and advisors, and from my cooperating teacher gave me a nuanced level of insight and analysis into my teaching practice that went above and beyond the simplistic and reductive feedback I received from edTPA. I know for a fact that if I had completed a portfolio assessment that had been developed by my teacher preparation program it would have been more responsive to my development as a teacher and teacher leader, allowed me to demonstrate my growth over time, held me to a higher standard, and given me accurate and purposeful feedback to inform my future practice. None of these things happened when I completed edTPA.

In becoming a teacher, we talk a lot about assessment—about what the most accurate and representative ways of assessing our students’ growth and performance are. We also talk a lot about how inaccurate and unfair assessments can do more harm than good to our students.

I urge you to reconsider edTPA’s misuse of assessment as a summative measure – one that only measures a specific point of performance and not sustained growth or performance over an extended time period. To use a metric that was designed to evaluate performance at a specific point in time as a summative, capstone-esque measure, is to commit what is one of the cardinal sins of assessment. I am taught, and expected, to do better than this by my students, and I in turn expect that the legislature does better than this by me.

It is imperative that the implementation of edTPA is halted. The standardized, scripted assessment of teacher candidates that occurs under edTPA is one that I can guarantee will inhibit the future of education within the state of Connecticut. It will have significant and detrimental impacts on both the teachers and the students within our state.

Again, I urge you to support Raised Bill 5376. The future of my profession, and the future of our students in the state of Connecticut, depend on it.

Best regards,
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