



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Amy Dowell, Connecticut State Director
Education Reform Now Connecticut
March 13, 2019

Re: Governor's Bill No. 7149, An Act Bolstering Minority Teacher Recruitment

Raised Bill No. 1022, An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Raised Bill No. 1017, An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and Members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Governor's Bill No 7149, and Raised Bills 1017 and 1022.

In Support of Governor's Bill No. 7149 and Raised Bill No. 1022:

On behalf of Education Reform Now CT, I strongly support the efforts before you to increase minority teacher recruitment and retention. The data has shown, educators of color relate to students of color in a way that leads to trusting relationships and increases student engagement. Furthermore, greater diversity in the teaching workforce benefits all students. Every child in our public schools should have the opportunity to see adults of color as educators and role models. However, while 46% of CT students are students of color, our educator workforce is composed of only 9% educators of color. We must do more to overcome this underrepresentation.

Setting a numerical goal for increased recruitment of teachers of color, requiring reciprocity agreements, and providing financial incentives (loan forgiveness, housing assistance, etc.) are all solid starting points. But we also need to look at systemic upgrades to build a long-term pipeline of qualified educators of color and to encourage their long-term retention in our education system. I urge this Committee to go even further by taking a comprehensive look at all stages of the teacher pipeline. In addition to recruitment, preparation, and certification, we must also address the induction of new teachers, their placement where they are most needed and will be most valued, and their long-term retention. I recommend that, in addition to the measures proposed in the Governor's Bill and Raised Bill 1022, the Committee also consider how best to foster these aspects of the teaching career.

Moreover, as a state, we need to remember that we will build the strongest pathways into the teaching career by serving our students of color well during their K-12 years.

In support of Raised Bill No. 1017, An Act Concerning the Open Choice Program:

I would also like to voice my support for Raised Bill 1017, which would require receiving districts with more than forty open choice students to receive funding for an education advocate to assist students and parents with the transition. However, I strongly recommend

that the Committee consider a much broader and more impactful measure with respect to Open Choice: namely, expanding the program statewide.

Connecticut's Open Choice program allows students to attend school in any participating district with the region in which they reside. It therefore gives parents the power to select the school that best serves the needs of their individual child. If we were to expand this program, we could give students and families more options, and -- at the same time -- we might begin to enable alternatives for smaller districts that are facing declining enrollment. If they can allow students from neighboring towns to fill their open seats, they might be able to increase their enrollment numbers, to maintain their facilities and staff. In today's economy, particularly as the state looks to find efficiencies in our education system, expanding Open Choice is a policy that makes moral and economic sense.

I look forward to a robust conversation about expanding this program so that we can protect the best parts of our public schools, while progressing towards solutions for all students.

