

**TESTIMONY REGARDING HB 5044, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE
FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

**By Robert M. Goodrich, Co-founder of R.A.C.C.E.
To the Committee on Appropriations
2/16/2016**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Robert M. Goodrich, and I am a co-founder of Radical Advocates for Cross-Cultural Education. We are an educational advocacy group located in Waterbury whose mission is to challenge systems of oppression by advocating for culturally competent educational practices. Therefore, we believe the most effective way to triumph over systemic forms of oppression is to have an educational system that serves the historically underserved and underrepresented.

We understand that our state's fiscal health is in jeopardy and sacrifices must be made. However, we believe our most critical piece of infrastructure, our educational institutions, should be the least affected by these sacrifices.

R. A. C. C. E. believes in making educational justice a priority; and, to that end, we believe students of color should be afforded greater opportunities to be taught by teachers of color. Decades of research show us that student performance, achievement gaps, disparities in discipline, and graduation rates are positively impacted when students have greater access to similarly raced teachers.

Therefore we encourage this committee to continue funding programs that have the potential to alleviate racial disparities among the teaching force, such as Praxis tutoring, Praxis test fee reimbursement and scholarships to non-white candidates seeking to become teachers in Connecticut through accelerated certification routes. Maintaining current funding levels is critical. This will allow for data collection and the development of research-based accountability standards, which will help establish Connecticut as a leader in the recruitment as well as placement of minority teachers in all of our districts.

The number of minority candidates in our teacher preparation programs is the lowest it's been in twenty years. Long-term solutions to our shortage of minority teachers in Connecticut can only be considered when a commitment to funding current programs isn't in jeopardy. Diversifying our teacher workforce can only happen if we choose to give life, through funding mechanisms, to programs that effectively recruit and retain increasingly large numbers of minority teacher candidates. To this end, we encourage repurposing or shifting existing funds to programs that are proven to be successful.

Finally, R. A. C. C. E. speaks to you through the lens of Waterbury, an Alliance District. Waterbury has large achievement gaps, disparate discipline impacts on Black and Hispanic students; higher levels of chronic absenteeism among its non-white students; and lower graduation rates for non-white students. Waterbury has a growing Black and Hispanic student population, but has yet to match this growth in non-white students with an equal number of non-white teachers. Over the last seven years Waterbury Public Schools has hired 1059 teachers of which only 89 are Black or Hispanic. We urge you to continue to fund programs that positively impact the recruitment and retention of minority teachers, especially for our students in Waterbury.

Respectfully,

Robert M. Goodrich
Co-founder, R.A.C.C.E.
2/16/16

