

RADICAL ADVOCATES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION

OUR MISSION IS TO CHALLENGE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION BY ADVOCATING FOR CULTURALLY
COMPETENT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES.

TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 379: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force; SB 380: An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination From Teacher Evaluations; and HB 5551: An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools

By Robert M. Goodrich, Co-founder of R.A.C.C.E.

To the Committee on Education

3/7/2016

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education 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.

HB 5551: An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools

We support the additions and subtractions being placed before this committee. We believe the levying of firmer accountability standards for districts like Waterbury, who have difficulty sustaining progress in both teaching and learning, will have positive impacts for our students. We strongly support financial incentives for school professionals who excel while working in Commissioner Network Schools. Finally, we support the mandate requiring funding allocated to a commissioner's network school to be used exclusively for turnaround programming. These provisions make districts more accountable for their use of state funds. HB 5551 will also increase parents' and the communities' faith that if municipalities can't turnaround schools then the state can and will.

SB 380: An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination From Teacher Evaluations

We oppose SB 380. Repealing a foundational piece of educational reform will not only stifle potential progress, but it will make it next to impossible to comprehensibly measure teacher efficacy. The teacher evaluation process is already perceived as paternalistic and nepotistic. In Waterbury, fourteen of thirty schools are designated as Focus or Turnaround Schools. In the last two years not a single teacher was given a rating below Developing. This is not to say teachers don't work hard, or that most teachers aren't putting their best effort forward. It simply draws our attention to this question. How can thousands of students struggle to exhibit grade level proficiency, but nearly 100% of their teachers earned a rating of proficient? In a perfect world we would have a diversified set of student performance data included in teacher evaluations. We urge you to add rubrics that would evaluate whether or not disparities exist in classrooms, and which demographics are affected by these disparities. Waterbury classrooms are filled with students who are underserved, underrepresented and under-protected. Passing this act exposes our students to an increased risk of an inequitable educational experience.

SB 379: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force

Dr. Arlene Arias, a co-founder of R. A. C. C. E. was a task force member. We strongly support SB 379. We encourage this committee to find ways to shift or reallocate funds to further support minority teacher recruitment efforts. As recommended, a Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council within the Department of Education would be instrumental to furthering the success of all programs, but community stakeholders must also have a place on this council. Accountability measures must be added to ensure municipal hiring practices are accounted for, and are transparent. Additionally, we recommend a committee to be formed to clarify the benefits and/or barriers to the current licensure process for minority teacher candidates. Finally, it is imperative that the use of the Praxis be evaluated. We must be certain our state's licensure test, the Praxis, can delineate who can become a proficient educator and who can't. It must be made clear that the Praxis exam doesn't disparately affect minority teacher candidates. If it does, we must find a different test.

Respectfully,

Robert M. Goodrich
Co-founder, R.A.C.C.E.
3/7/16