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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **sSB 221**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING ASPIRING EDUCATORS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes “aspiring educators,” rather than “diverse educators,” eligible for existing law’s diversity teacher recruitment scholarship, which potentially broadens the pool of eligible candidates.

Under current law, the scholarship targets “diverse” students, which are those whose race is other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino by the federal Office of Management and Budget for use by the U.S. Census Bureau. Under the bill, an “aspiring educator” is an individual from a population subgroup that (a) is underrepresented in the teaching profession in Connecticut and (b) has been identified under state law as a teacher shortage area.

Under current law, the State Department of Education (SDE) commissioner annually determines geographic and subject areas with teacher shortages based on teacher vacancies, new certificates issued, and classes being taught by people without training specific to the subject area. Under the bill, the commissioner must also determine the population subgroups in which a teacher shortage exists and, when doing so, consider those that are underrepresented in teaching in the state based on data in the statewide public school information system (see BACKGROUND).

This potentially broadens eligibility for the scholarship and shortage designation. Although the bill does not define “subgroup,” presumably subgroup categories could include things in addition to race and ethnicity, such as gender, socio-economic status, disability, or other similar status.

The bill also allows the education commissioner to use up to \$250,000

of unexpended scholarship funds to promote the teaching profession.

It also makes conforming and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

### **SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Under current law, the aspiring educators diversity student scholarship program, which the bill renames the aspiring educators scholarship program, awards annual scholarships of up to \$10,000 to students who graduated from high school in an alliance district (see BACKGROUND) and are enrolled in good standing in a teacher preparation program at any four-year institution of higher education. The bill eliminates the requirement that students graduate from an alliance district and replaces it with any school district in the state, thus broadening eligibility.

The bill requires SDE, in consultation with the Education Committee chairpersons, to develop a policy for administering the scholarship with the new criteria by January 1, 2027. SDE must annually award scholarships under the new criteria beginning FY 27 and, beginning January 1, 2028, annually submit a report to the Education Committee with data on the scholarship recipients' population subgroups and the teacher preparation programs in which they are enrolled.

### ***Use of Unexpended Funds to Promote Teaching Profession***

The bill allows the commissioner, by March first of each year, to determine if there are any unexpended funds in the program for the fiscal year and if so, she may use up to \$250,000 of them to implement the teaching profession promotion plan.

By law, the plan must include (1) a way for school districts to develop partnerships with in-state educator preparation programs and (2) counseling programs to inform high school students about, and recruit them to, the teaching profession. It also requires SDE to distribute to boards of education information that promotes the teaching profession, including materials on in-state educator preparation programs and alternative route to certification programs.

**BACKGROUND**

***Public School Information System***

SDE must administer this system to (1) establish a standardized electronic data collection and reporting protocol to comply with state and federal reporting requirements, (2) improve the exchange of information from school-to-school and district-to-district, and (3) maintain the confidentiality of individual student and teacher data. In addition to students and teachers, the system includes data on individual schools and districts and preschool children (CGS § 10-10a(b) & (c)).

***Alliance Districts***

The alliance district program requires each of the state’s 36 lowest performing school districts (as measured by the accountability index scores) to submit an improvement plan to SDE for approval before the department releases the district’s alliance funding (a portion of the annual education cost sharing grant that these districts receive). The plan must detail how it intends to use its alliance funding and how this will increase student achievement.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute  
Yea 45 Nay 0 (03/16/2026)