

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-221 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING ASPIRING EDUCATORS.

Vote Date: 3/16/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/23/2026

File No.: 341

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The intent of SB 221 is to ensure aspiring educators in the state of Connecticut have a more affordable and accessible pathway to becoming a teacher. This bill seeks to address the shortages and diversity of teachers in the Connecticut public school systems by creating additional pathways for Connecticut high school students to enroll and complete a teacher preparation program at a four-year institution of higher education.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The substitute (1) specifies the unexpended funds that may be used to implement the plan to promote the teaching profession cannot be more than \$250,000 and (2) adds sections 3-7 from SB 138 (SDE agency bill)

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Commissioner for the Connecticut State Department of Education, Charlene Russell-Tucker submitted testimony in support of SB 221. While she expressed strong support for this bill, and the legislature's efforts to build the teaching workforce, she made the following recommendations: (1) additional language should clarify that scholarship funds are not to be utilized for any other financial need at the student's institution beyond tuition expenses, (2) the definition of an aspiring educator should contain the following, "an individual enrolled in an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) approved by the State Board of Education," (3) the determination of student eligibility based on financial need should be verified by EPP partners using each student's FASFA, (4) language should be included to acknowledge and accommodate students who may want to pursue graduate degrees immediately following

completion of their EPP programs, and (5) consider eliminating the line that earmarks lapsing funding.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Anonymous, Anonymous submitted testimony offering general comments of support for SB 221. They highlighted a few issues they hope this bill will address. For one, they want to ensure this bill affords underrepresented students' equal opportunity to become teachers, and they're not unfairly excluded from the scholarship. Second, they're concerned that the current timeline for when the scholarship is awarded is too late into the semester, forcing students to pay out of pocket and retroactively use their scholarship. Thus, they encourage the legislature to consider adjusting the timeline.

Vice-President of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, Leslie Blatteau President of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, Kate Dias

The following leadership from the New Haven Federation of Teachers submitted testimony in support of SB 221. They stated that they're proud of the work their members are doing with New Haven students as the teacher education pathway continues to grow and strengthen. Thus, they support expanding diversity scholarships and CHFA mortgage assistance so that more students can have viable pathways towards becoming and remaining public school teachers.

Policy Director of CBIA, Danielle Cloud submitted testimony in support of SB 221. She stated that strengthening Connecticut's aspiring educators' scholarship program will begin to address the ongoing teacher shortages while ensuring students have access to high-quality instruction across the state.

Vice President of CEA, Joslyn DeLancey submitted testimony in support of SB 221. She specifically expressed support for expanding the reach of diversity scholarships to those graduating from Connecticut school districts assuming it is the goal of recruiting educators who reflect the diversity of Connecticut's students. She additionally expressed support for expanding the eligibility of diversity scholarships and CFHA mortgage assistance to teachers from communities that are underrepresented in the teaching profession.

Deputy Director of ConnCAN, Hamish MacPhail submitted testimony in support of SB 221. They stated that every child in Connecticut deserves a qualified educator in their classroom, but for more than a generation Connecticut's education workforce has experienced shortages and underrepresentation. Thus, programs like this are critical to ensuring aspiring educators can afford to become and remain teachers.

Executive Director of Educators for Excellence, Daniel Pearson submitted testimony in support of SB 221. He expressed support for the definition provided in SB 221 for "diverse students" while providing additional comments and revisions for other bills addressing gaps Connecticut's education system.

Member of the Portland BOE, Meg Scata submitted testimony in support of SB 221. She stated that by providing aspiring educator scholarship program to all Connecticut public high school graduates enrolled in a teacher preparation program, it widens the pool of students

who benefit and increases the amount of people who will go on to teach in Connecticut public schools.

Dean of AACTE, Christopher Trombly submitted testimony in support of SB 221. He requested that SB 221 clarify whether the legislature intends for these scholarship funds be disbursed as direct stipend payments to students when those funds cannot be applied to financial aid or is solely intended to cover tuition and fees. This is relevant for students who may have received other awards that cover their tuition and fees.

Board of Education Member, Willie Medina submitted testimony offering general comments of support for SB 221. They primarily emphasized in their testimony that the current education funding formula is not doing what it intended to do, and until that is addressed proposed bills that address the needs of students and teachers alike will be insufficient.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Dr. Linda Dalessio submitted testimony in opposition to SB 221. They expressed concern over some of the language and concepts contained in SB 221 like: aspiring educator, diversity, and diverse student. They requested a definition be provided for aspiring educator and clear parameters around who is eligible for this scholarship.

Assistant Professor, Drew McWeeney submitted testimony in opposition to SB 221. They stated that limiting financial awards to specific demographic categories rather than enrollment or merit criteria, it is unfair. Instead, they proposed that a bill be passed to provide universally accessible financial assistance for every student enrolled in a teacher preparation program.

Joseph Sokolovic submitted testimony in opposition to SB 221. They expressed concern that SB 221 is contributing to institutional racism by avoiding equity language that addresses the problem and replacing it with softer terms. He referenced how diversity was replaced with population subgroups as an example. He is concerned that by refusing to name race it shields Connecticut from accountability while preserving the same racial outcomes.

Reported by:Lucy Sheldon

Date: 4/7/2026