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# *Committee Meeting*

of

## SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*“The Committees will receive testimony from invited guests  
on the issue of teacher diversity”*

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**LOCATION:** Committee Room 4  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**DATE:** February 7, 2019  
10:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES PRESENT:**

Senator Sandra B. Cunningham, Chair  
Senator Vin Gopal, Vice Chair  
Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Chair  
Senator Shirley K. Turner, Vice Chair  
Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Senator Samuel D. Thompson



**ALSO PRESENT:**

Sarah B. Haimowitz  
Anita M. Saynisch  
*Office of Legislative Services  
Committee Aides*

Rosa Farias  
Elizabeth Mahn  
*Senate Majority  
Committee Aides*

Rebecca Panitch  
Jared Sutton  
*Senate Republican  
Committee Aides*

***Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey***

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*Chair*  
SHIRLEY K. TURNER  
*Vice-Chair*

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SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM  
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**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
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**COMMITTEE NOTICE**

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** SENATOR SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM, CHAIRWOMAN  
SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ, CHAIRWOMAN

**SUBJECT:** COMMITTEE MEETING - FEBRUARY 7, 2019

*The public may address comments and questions to Sarah B. Haimowitz, Committee Aide, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Natalie Pagan, Secretary, at (609)847-3850, fax (609)984-9808, or e-mail: OLSAideSHI@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.*

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**The Senate Higher Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee will meet on Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 4, 1st Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.**

**The Senate Higher Education and the Senate Education Committees will receive testimony from invited guests on the issue of teacher diversity.**

Issued 2/1/19

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**SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Chair):** Good morning, and welcome to the joint Senate Education and Senate Higher Ed Committee.

Roll call.

**MS. SAYNISCH (Committee Aide):** Representing the Senate Education Committee; Senator Ruiz.+

**SENATOR RUIZ:** Here.

**MS. SAYNISCH:** Senator Turner.

**SENATOR SHIRLEY K. TURNER (Vice Chair):** Here.

**MS. SAYNISCH:** Senator Cunningham.

**SENATOR SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM (Chair):** Here.

**MS. SAYNISCH:** Representing the Senate Higher Education Committee; Senator Cunningham.

**SENATOR CUNNINGHAM:** Here.

**MS. SAYNISCH:** Senator Gopal is here; he just stepped out for a moment.

Senator Ruiz.

**SENATOR RUIZ:** Here.

**MS. SAYNISCH:** Thank you.

**SENATOR RUIZ:** And I know other members will be joining us, but we have an array of -- a lot of speakers, so we want to get started.

I wanted to just, before I brought up the first group, just note that this issue is an issue that doesn't solely impact the State of New Jersey; it's an issue that impacts the entire country.

Senator Cunningham and I were invited to attend a charter school in Newark, probably around six months ago. And they reached out to us, just talking about how they have, kind of, a feeder program in place



to staff up their classrooms with people who -- some who were prior students, in some cases; some who are neighbors in the community of the children who they serve. And the circumstances that they faced were incredible, when the person was attempting to get certified.

And so from that we made a commitment that we would bring in stakeholder groups. And I think the most important thing that I have learned in the short process from talking through with all of you, is that there is work that's being done, whether you are representing the teacher workforce, whether you're a higher institution, whether you're the Department. There is work that's being done.

And I guess, today, we should just have a broad conversation to uncover where the benefits are and where we can create policies that are uniform; where we can support programs that should be expanded; and where we can generate extra resources to be sure that we start, really, creating a pipeline to reinforce what I think we want to do today -- which is, at some point in time, diversify the workforce with teachers who are experienced, and supported, and who represent the student body.

I went to a Catholic school; and the first time that I had a Latina teach me was in 8th grade; and that was probably the only time I had a woman of color during my time frame in grammar school. And it made an extraordinary difference. I think when our students have an opportunity to be before an experienced professional leader in the classroom who looks like them, it lends itself in different opportunities, specifically in communities where I represent -- that they know that they can achieve great goals and do exactly what their teachers are doing in the classroom.

So I look forward to learning; and I'll turn it over to my Co-Chair.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

First of all, it's nice to see such a nice group of people here today. This is an important issue for all of us in this room.

One of the things, that I've found that's very important, is we need our young people to see role models. And unfortunately, a lot of those role models are not in the home. So they look for those role models in teachers. Teachers play an important part in the thinking, and the life, and the dreams, and the hopes of many of our young people.

I'm especially interested in seeing diverse men in the classroom. I think that's extremely important, especially in African American communities where, unfortunately, we don't always have a father figure in the home.

So I'm looking forward to learning as much as I can today, from all of you, from sharing information; and perhaps to see something really, really good come out of this meeting.

So let's enjoy it and learn as much as we possibly can.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ; Thank you, Chairwoman Cunningham.

I'm going to ask Mr. Na'jee Carter and Ms. Laura Jones, from North Star Academy, to kind of lead us off so that this event takes place the same way Senator Cunningham was introduced to the subject matter.

For the record, I also want to note that Senator Thompson has joined us this morning.

Good morning.

**NA'JEE CARTER:** Good morning.

SENATOR RUIZ: Good morning.

MR. CARTER: My name is Na'Jee Carter, and I am Principal at North Star Alexander Street Elementary School in Newark, the city where I grew up.

My students are nearly all black and Latino, and overwhelmingly qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

And yet, they score higher in the math and the English State exams than their wealthier suburban peers.

This happens because of one reason: the passion and commitment of our teachers.

I'm proud to say, too, that over 50 percent of Uncommon teachers are people of color. We have an organizational commitment to increase the ranks of teachers of color. One of the ways we do this, every year, is that we scour the country for the brightest college juniors who might be interested in teaching. We give them each a mentor teacher, train them, and then they teach summer school, closely supervised by a mentor teacher.

The majority of them -- over 80 percent -- go back to their senior year in college with a job offer from Uncommon to come back to teach at our schools when they graduate.

Some of them are our own graduates of North Star.

We are also developing partnerships with historically black colleges, such as Morehouse College, an all-men's college in Atlanta.

So part one, obviously, is getting people of color to come teach. I told you earlier that our students have reversed the achievement gap with the more affluent kids in the state. How our teachers can do this is critically important. Our teachers start their year in early August with three weeks of professional development; then, ongoing coaching that is not evaluative. I want to stress this part. It's not evaluative; it's real coaching.

Our teachers get about 200 hours of professional development and coaching every year. But here's the big problem: The teacher certification system gets in the way of increasing the percentage of teachers of color, even when we know that they are qualified to teach. I want to be clear: High standards are good. We would not have the schools we have; we would not be sending kids to and through college if we did not have high standards.

The problem happens when the standards don't actually match what the teachers need to know in order to be able to teach. For example, I had to let go of a wonderful teacher of color, who was incredible at teaching kindergartners, not just how to read, but to love to read. This teacher shared a classroom with a certified teacher as a teaching assistant, but received the same rigorous training and coaching as part of her supervised teaching experience. This gives us a chance to see how this person teaches, while she or he is going through the certification process. And yet, no matter how hard she tried, she kept failing the math portion of the Praxis by only a few points.

She wasn't failing the Praxis because she wasn't smart. She was failing because she had not received the rigorous math education she deserved when she was a student. We had no choice but to let her go.

Right now, nearly 40 teachers are at risk of not obtaining their certification and losing their jobs at Uncommon Schools New Jersey because of the Praxis. Over 70 percent of these teachers are teachers of color; 70 percent. These are people who we should be helping to become teachers, not making sure that they will quit and go to another profession.

So Senators Cunningham and Ruiz, I know how much you care about kids, education, and equality. The certification system is broken, and it is hurting kids of color; and I urge you to seek a remedy so we can have excellent teachers who reflect the faces of our students in their classrooms.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

**L A U R A - A N N E J O N E S:** Good morning.

My name is Laura Anne Jones, and I'm a current 3rd grade teacher at North Star Alexander Street Elementary School.

I really appreciate being able to share my story, because I really hope it makes a difference.

I came to North Star in 2016, and just fell in love with all of the children. I started out as a teaching assistant in a mentor teacher's classroom, because I wasn't certified. And the plan was for me to take the Praxis and become a certified, full-fledged teacher.

Even though I was an assistant teacher, my mentor teacher in my class gave me many opportunities to teach under her supervision, including math. She would help me plan, along with my instructional leader; I would practice my lessons ahead of time, and I would deliver a lesson, and then get feedback on what I could improve on the next time. This happened several times a week.

And with this cycle of planning together -- we would practice and deliver lessons; and then I would get feedback immediately that I could incorporate the next time, so I would get better as a teacher.

As I improved, I grew way more confident as a teacher. I knew that every day I was becoming a stronger teacher for my students

The results showed themselves. Our 3rd grade class was among the highest in all of Uncommon Newark's network of six elementary schools. And yet, there was an irony that kept happening at the same time. I kept taking and failing the math portion of the Praxis test. Every failure was a warning that I might not be able to continue to teach.

How is it possible that I was an excellent 3rd grade math teacher, but I could not pass the math portion of the Praxis test?

For that answer, you'd have to go back to my own education.

I don't remember learning much math in high school. When I got to Kean University, I sat in a remedial math class, and my peers were the same students who were in my high school math classes. So it was really no wonder that I couldn't pass the math portion of the Praxis. It was not for lack of trying. I got tutoring; I got Praxis for Dummies.

I have a master's in Education; I am currently working on my Ph.D. in Education. But so much of that material I had never seen before. I took the Praxis about 12 times over the course of two years. I spent hundreds of dollars on practice tests, on tutoring, on books, and on the test themselves, not to mention the emotional toll that it took on me.

I wanted to be a teacher so badly, and I knew that I was serving my students well. But I had to face the reality that I might never become a teacher.

As the end of my second year at North Star approached, they told me, plainly, that they couldn't keep me unless I became certified, no matter how good I was.

And May of 2018, I had still not passed the Praxis exam. On my 12th try, I was only a few points shy, but that wasn't enough. My contract was not renewed for the following school year, and I was just out of a job.

On June 26, I took the Praxis, and I finally passed.

The first thing I did was I called my principal, Mr. Carter, and asked for my job back. Luckily, he did hire me back.

But I suppose that my story is a success story; but there are thousands like me who give up, and I don't blame them. The hurdles are just too great and just too costly.

Because I had received a subpar public school education, I was at risk of being barred from a job that I loved, from trying to do my part to ensure more students didn't face the same kind of obstacles that I did.

I hope that my story helps shed light on what is happening, on the ground, when young people from urban communities try to become teachers.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story with you, and I hope, somehow, you can fix this problem.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

So it appears, in your case, 13 was the lucky number. (laughter)

I am so glad that you were able to pass, and that you are part our teaching workforce in the City of Newark.

Are there any questions or comments from--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I wanted to say, I've met you before; but I want to congratulate you.

But also to congratulate you for just not giving up; for being determined. And that, in itself (applause)--

MS. JONES: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: That in itself says something about you as an individual, and makes you a finer teacher; because you can talk about the need to be persistent in accomplishing your dream.

So congratulations.

MS. JONES: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

And thank you for making the trip up here, and for stepping outside of the classroom.

I just think it was critically important that-- We heard this story when we went to visit the school. And I think that so many of you probably get lost in our system if you don't get nestled in a school that has an encouraging principal, or a master teacher who takes the individual under their wing. And we, potentially, could be losing individuals with such great passion that we critically need in our classrooms.

So thank you very much; thank you.

For the record, I want to note that Senator Kean has joined the Committee hearing.

Thank you very much.

Next, I'm going to ask the Department of Education, Dr. Linda Eno, and staff to come up.



I know the Department just most recently launched an initiative; so these are some exciting days, I think, for--

**L I N D A P. E N O, Ed.D.:** Good morning, Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Cunningham, and members of the Senate Education and Higher Education Committees.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's joint Committee hearing discussion on increasing teacher diversity in New Jersey.

I am Linda Eno, Assistant Commissioner of Academics and Performance.

And I accompanied by my colleagues, Diana Pasculli, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Performance; and Tanisha Davis, Director of the Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Recognition.

In the words of Maya Angelo, "In diversity there is beauty and there is strength." Diversity benefits us individually, and as a society.

The U.S. Department of Education's 2016 State of Educator Workforce Diversity Report describes how all students benefit from a racially diverse teacher workforce. Some benefits include preparing all students for a diverse society, building cultural sensitivity, counteracting stereotypes, and ultimately, closing the achievement gap.

Studies have shown that when compared to their peers, teachers of color are more likely to hold high expectations for students of color and to develop trusting relationships with students, particularly those with whom they share a cultural background.

Research finds students of color taught by at least one teacher of color in elementary school were less likely to drop out of high school, and more likely to pursue college.

Despite this compelling information, our educator workforce remains predominantly white; and the urgency grows as our nation's population and, most relevantly, our student population, becomes more racially and ethnically diverse.

The Department of Education's mission is to support schools and districts to ensure that New Jersey's 1.4 million students have equitable access to high-quality education and achieve academic excellence. We believe a racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce is critical to meeting the needs of all students.

In the 2017-2018 school year, teachers of color represented 16 percent of the teacher workforce, while of our 1.4 million New Jersey students, 56 percent were students of color.

It's important to note that New Jersey's teacher workforce is gradually becoming more diverse. The new and novice teacher workforce -- described as their first four years in teaching -- is about 22 percent teachers of color, compared to 16 percent of the overall teacher workforce. While the new teacher trend is positive, student diversity is increasing more quickly, and the gap continues to grow.

The Department is dedicated to ensuring that the ethnic and racial diversity of the state's educator workforce reflects New Jersey's unique diversity. As a Department, we have expanded our definition of a *high-quality educator workforce* to include diversity and cultural competence. Aligned to our mission and the Governor's call for a stronger, fairer New Jersey, the Department has set a goal that, by 2025, New Jersey students will have access to a high-quality novice teacher pool that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of New Jersey's public school students. Four thousand

new teachers enter the profession in the state each year; achieving our goal will significantly impact the diversity of the overall teacher workforce.

Educators come into the workforce through what can be described as a *talent pipeline*. The U.S. Department of Education's report identifies key places within in this pipeline where diversity decreases. We risk losing candidates of color as they go from high school to college; at the time they must select entry into an educator preparation program; during completion of the educator preparation program; at the transition to acquiring the job; and in their first four years of work.

Each of the places that we lose candidates of color along the pipeline represents an opportunity for us to collaboratively do things differently to produce a better outcome. We cannot regulate our way to a diverse teacher workforce, and the Department cannot accomplish this goal alone. We are committed to working with stakeholders, including but not limited to schools and districts, students, parents, educator preparation programs, professional associations, county colleges, policymakers, and community-rooted organizations, to develop a shared vision and commitment to this work, and to collectively implement nationally promising recruitment, preparation, and retention strategies.

Here are some of the ways that we are demonstrating our commitment to diversifying the teacher workforce.

We partnered with Rutgers University, William Paterson University, Montclair State University, and Rowan University to hold the first New Jersey Diversifying the Teacher Workforce Convening. The purpose of the Convening was to provide a national and state perspective

on teacher diversity, raise awareness, and highlight implementation of best practices throughout the state.

Along with nine other states, New Jersey joined the Council of Chief State School Officers' Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative, which aims to diversify the education workforce and to support future and current educators in implementing culturally relevant practices. Our New Jersey team includes representation from the Department, educational organizations, school and district level administration, and educator preparation providers.

The State budget committed \$750,000 to the Department's development of a grant opportunity for two projects designed to increase teacher diversity. The Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline grants were awarded to Montclair State University, partnering with Newark Public Schools; and Rutgers University's Center for Effective School Practices, partnering with a consortium of Passaic County charter schools. Grantees will engage in various strategies rooted in promising research for increasing educator diversity.

In alignment with CCSSO and The Learning Policy Institutes' recommendations to states, we are assessing how we can support and scale "Grow Your Own" programs that provide opportunities for diverse students in middle and high school to experience the teaching profession, increasing their interest in pursuing teaching as a career. We are learning from partnerships that develop pathways for students to go from high school to educator preparation programs, and upon completion return to their local districts as teachers.

We plan to support an increase in the number of teaching academies operating in the state's comprehensive and vocational schools, and encourage partnerships and articulation agreements between districts and colleges.

New Jersey's State Teacher of the Year, Jennifer Skomial, has launched a positive campaign to elevate the perception of the profession, with an emphasis on diversity.

The Department provides ongoing support to educator preparation programs seeking to increase program diversity by sharing data on completer diversity, hosting data meetings, and encouraging goal-setting and progress monitoring. As program data comes in, the Department will highlight best practices of preparation programs. In a few weeks we will publicly release our annual Educator Preparation Program Performance Reports. While the program reports have historically included completer diversity, for the first time, these reports will also include current teacher workforce and student diversity.

Other promising practices the Department is exploring are residency models for aspiring teachers, recruitment of career changers and veterans -- Troops for Teachers being an example -- and the development of a teaching certification pathway for paraprofessionals.

In closing, the Department values the impact a diverse teacher workforce will have on eliminating our achievement gaps and creating equity for all students.

I hope this testimony provided insight into the work currently underway at the Department.

Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to appear before you.

My colleagues from the Department and I are available for any questions you may have.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

So you said -- which is great -- 2025 is the goal line for the DOE, right?

DR. ENO: It's the first goal line.

SENATOR RUIZ: It's the first goal line.

I think my question is, how we are-- So a two-part question. We've heard -- from conversations that I had with the different groups that are testifying today -- people are pointing to the Praxis as a point of an issue. So I'd like to touch a little bit on that--

DR. ENO: Sure.

SENATOR RUIZ: --to see how we're going to address that.

And also, any recommendations for us to pursue legislatively as we move on this track. So it's not solely a Department-centered initiative, a university or a school, or a thing that we -- at some point after we amass all of the information, that we put this in statutes; so long after we're gone we continue to diversify the teacher workforce base.

DR. ENO: Yes.

So you pointed to two things; and I'll take the Praxis first, and then I'll point to my colleagues and let them jump in.

But I think that we are looking for that intersection between high expectations and context flexibility. And that's always the challenge. And right now, we are in what our Commissioner would call the *assess phase*,

which is to really dig deep to understand what are the challenges, how are we seeing those, and what are the opportunities for remedies.

So I would say that we have a lot of anecdotal evidence right now; but that we have not done our due diligence in terms of really understanding the data, and what barriers we may have that are in regulation, and how to address those along the continuum of the pipeline.

**DIANA PASCULLI:** Something else that we think is important for the conversation is to focus on all of the different places where we are not receiving diverse enough candidates. All along the line; not just when teachers are entering either their educator prep program and taking Praxis, or when they're entering the classroom in an alternate route, for instance.

So we recognize that as a concern and something to analyze; but we also recognize a few points. One -- some of these assessments have gotten harder in recent years, and we know that the actual vendor -- ETS for basic skills, the entryway assessment -- is being looked at and they're reevaluating the math course requirement. We recognize that it was very heavy in geometry. So there are real considerations already in place, in addition to other policy considerations.

We just want to make sure that we're all looking at it from all avenues, though; because what we know is that as some of the certification requirements have increased over the last few years, our teacher workforce has not gotten less diverse. We have an issue that we -- and weren't on pace to keep up with the diversity of our students, whether or not we have these different assessments. We actually are seeing, with newer educators, more diverse pipeline; even in the last four years where, arguably, some

assessments have gotten more difficult, and we've kept that selectivity high barrier pretty standard.

So all that is to say we think that we need to all look at it from all different avenues; and how we're getting interested and diverse candidates. And in New Jersey, we have our students look -- as you mentioned, Senator -- up to their own educators as role models, as something they can become.

SENATOR RUIZ: And I think you referenced this; but one important thing is that when we start-- Because this has to be a collective approach, and it can't be in the higher institutions. We have to start creating these pipeline feeders in high school.

MS. PASCULLI: Yes.

DR. ENO: And one of the things that I pointed to was the opportunities -- both in our comprehensive schools and our career and technical education schools -- to create academies. And we are seeing this as a growing trend. And I think the conversation about preparation for Praxis beginning earlier -- whether to not that ends up being the right assessment -- I think it's critical that students know what this looks like; that it doesn't become a surprise. And that the conversation is embedded in real-world learning, in a way that, then, makes it much more accessible.

SENATOR RUIZ: But I think that, also, what we need to do is maybe talk about-- And Budget is always an issue, all of the time. But if there ever is an opportunity where we can lend resources; perhaps, coming up with some creative grant program for high schools that want to try this academy-type feeder, and connecting them with a Higher Ed -- that also supports and has an automatic return right back into that district. We can



do that innovatively with philanthropic money; it doesn't have to be tax-funded money. I think there would be a lot of interest in that.

The other thing, too, is to consider-- In the instance of the teacher who we heard this morning, Ms. Jones, she put out a lot of money out of her own pocket. We have to also find ways to support individuals who, perhaps, want to stay on track into getting into a classroom, and who may not have the financial wherewithal. And that's something else that we should think about -- creatively reaching out, and creating, kind of, a pool so that if someone reaches out to DOE, kind of, that we can support them through the process to ensure we don't lose that candidate.

Just thinking out loud.

DR. ENO: Both great ideas, and things that we've seen in some other fields, and we think have some real relevance.

**TANISHA DAVIS:** I wanted to just, quickly, add a bit about the Praxis analysis that we have done.

And as we identify that there is an achievement gap there, we have been looking at those scores to determine if a shift in a cut score, or a change in or removal of the assessment, would then get us to our goal. And what we found is, we actually end up not achieving our goal because of the again, small-in-size, number of candidates of color that attempt the assessment that are attracted to the profession -- we end up, actually, widening the diversity gap between teachers and students by adjusting those cut scores, or thinking through what -- if that assessment is creating a barrier to diversity itself.

SENATOR RUIZ: Has there ever been any discussion where a person would be able to come in and, kind of, have a forum to say, "I've

taken the test 12 times. My evaluations prove that I am a phenomenal teacher. I'm shy two points."

Have we thought about, kind of, a portfolio process in this space?

DR. ENO: So I think that there are several places where there are single assessment entry points across a number of different opportunities -- both for egress and exit -- that we're looking at. I think that it becomes a question of equity; and so I think everything's on the table as we start to really pull things apart and understand better what we have.

SENATOR RUIZ: Anybody have--

Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can you-- At the tail-end of your testimony, you started talking about residency models, improvement of career changes, and veterans; and development of teacher certification pathways for paraprofessionals. Can you tease that out a little bit more, please?

DR. ENO: Sure.

So I'll give you a little bit, and then I'm going to turn it over to colleagues.

So we were at William Paterson the other day, and they were talking about their programming for paraprofessionals. So because that's an entry point -- where we know we have higher percentages of individuals of color -- and it's an entry point that is accessible, and gets people into the school system and earning a wage, the opportunity to recruit and grow from the talent that is internal -- I think it presents a great opportunity.

Our Troops to Teacher grant -- another great opportunity -- where returning veterans are recruited into opportunities for education. We know this helps diversify the teacher workforce, both from the aspect of many of these being males, and many of them persons of color.

So I'm going to let Tanisha--

MS. DAVIS: So just--

Go ahead.

SENATOR RUIZ: Just something that popped into my head in talking about this. And this is why I think--

First of all, I want to formally welcome Senator Cunningham to the Ed Committee; and I am so proud that I'm serving now on her Committee in Higher Ed. And I think it's important because--

Just something popped into my head. There has to be a real seamless conversation in here. Even when we think about graduates in the high school setting, we're not measuring them whether they have the ability to pass a geometry test, right? That's not what we're measuring for high school proficiency. And yet, if you fast-forward and want to become a teacher, it's very geometry-centered -- that same test.

So there is a lot of conversation that has to get more critically aligned if we're going to get in the workspace here and kind of expand opportunities.

DR. ENO: Yes; agreed.

MS. DAVIS: I guess I'll respond to both questions.

SENATOR RUIZ: Sorry; I just--

MS. DAVIS: No, absolutely okay.

SENATOR KEAN: Chair prerogative. (laughter)

MS. DAVIS: And as I think Diana mentioned, the test vendor is well aware that -- and ETS has been working to revise that basic skills assessment; and has been working with teachers and teacher educators to determine what basic skills a teacher would need in the workforce and, of course, what teachers may need to progress through a preparation program.

So they actually have done those revisions and have adjusted the percentages, and the amount of the assessment that focuses on geometry versus data analysis.

But I wanted to, also, tease out some of the strategies, and just kind of share some best practices that we've seen.

National research does point to the effectiveness of residency models where candidates, who are aspiring to be teachers, could actually serve in paid residency roles in schools and classrooms during their clinical practice -- that year of clinical practice. So some examples of that would be -- Montclair has a partnership with Newark, where they are, again, offering a stipend to those candidates; so that as they're serving as student teachers or in their clinical practice, they can also be paid and, therefore, they're not going that year without an income.

That's also taking place at Monmouth University, where they piloted, quite a few years now, placing their student teachers or clinical interns in schools for a longer period of time; where they're deeply embedded in the school community, and then also earn an income, a stipend, from working in those settings.

So, again, we're hoping to be able to learn best practices from some of those programs, highlight those best practices, and figure out if there are ways that we can support and scale similar models.

The other question was about recruiting career changers -- and really thinking of how we form partnerships, possibly with labor; or learning more about those who are looking to change careers. And really go through the alternate route pathway, and provide support with candidates, depending on what education they already have, or what degrees they have; and figure out how we create that pathway where we're providing them with support, and guidance, and direction in entering the teacher workforce.

SENATOR KEAN: Do we need to update the alternate route approach to make it more reflective of either skill sets learned on other career pathways, or coming from other professions? I mean, is there-- Do we need to look -- getting back to the Chairwoman's approach -- to look at a more STEM approach?

DR. ENO: Thank you for bringing that up.

So we do have a set of regulatory updates proposed -- to come in front of the State Board at first reading in March -- which will focus on career and technical education, but sort of touch on some of how teachers are able to marry work experience and other sorts of preparation.

So I think we're starting to pull these pieces of certification apart, one area at a time. We're starting with career and technical education, and then I think there's opportunity to dig in a little more deeply.

Did that answer your question? Not quite.

SENATOR KEAN: I think we're dancing around the same issue, which is making sure you get the best, most qualified individuals at every point in the age spectrum; people who want to pursue the wonderful profession of teaching the classroom to benefit kids.

DR. ENO: Yes; and looking at how we weight the various aspects of -- as Senator Ruiz would say -- their portfolio of skills and background knowledge to make sure that we're being equitable across entry points.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you.

DR. ENO: You're welcome.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I don't know who this question should be addressed to, but I found it very interesting -- when going through the information to prepare for today's hearing -- that so many African American teachers, or minority teachers, are actually going through the less-traditional way to become teachers. They are going the alternate route.

I was surprised by that. Is that part of your data; and if it is, why is that?

DR. ENO: All right; so I think there are a number of things that could be playing into that. Some of the national trends are that college -- teacher preparation programs in college may not be as encouraged by families of color. They may want their students to head towards more lucrative professions; maybe professions that are held in a bit higher esteem. So I think the opportunity to, then, rethink where they are, once they get there--

But I think-- Yes, what Tanisha is flagging for me is the opportunity to earn money. The pathway into education is a bit longer, and the opportunity to earn while you learn is not as evident. There are some models for that; there's a model coming out of Monmouth University where students, in their preparation program, earn their substitute

certification in their sophomore year. That allows them to consolidate their classes and be earning and learning at the same time. So while substitute pay is not real high, it is an income that also allows them to be in sector and learning at the same time.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Okay.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Tuner, and then Senator Thompson.

SENATOR TURNER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I agree with you, in terms of students -- minority students, in particular -- now being directed to more lucrative salaries. Because back in the day, as they say, when I was in college, there were not the kinds of professional opportunities open to minorities. But today there are more opportunities available for minorities, and they pay a lot more money.

And of course, when you look at the tuition today in our colleges and universities, students are looking at a ton of loans that they have to repay, so they're looking for higher salaries. And teachers, quite frankly, are not being paid as professionals as they are in some other countries.

So we do need to look at rewarding our teachers better than what we are now, in terms of their salaries. Because, after all, they're teaching all of our professionals -- the doctors, the lawyers, the indian chiefs -- everyone -- but the salaries do not reflect the importance of the teachers.

So I think that we have to look at not just why students are not going into education, but we also have to look at attracting more qualified teachers and minorities who would not ordinarily go into some of these other areas.

Now, when I was in school -- unfortunately, Madam Chair -- I did not see a minority teacher at all. I went through K to 12, and there was no one of color who was in my classroom as a teacher. So that does make a difference.

But at the same time, the teachers who I did have were highly qualified and also deeply committed to teaching, and committed to every student. And I did not have a role model, as you would say, in the classroom who looked like me; but I did have a teacher, who was a person of non-color, who was my role model. And because of her, I went into education.

And then when I got to college -- at Trenton State College, at that time -- that was the first time I had an instructor, a faculty member, who was of color. And they did not have that many there; but the one who they did have taught Industrial Arts. And I wanted a teacher who looked like me, so I did take a course in Industrial Arts. (laughter) So sometimes you have to do what you have to do.

But I think that we have to look at everything; we have to look at what we need to do in order to get more minorities into teaching, and look at the way -- the reasons why they're not going into teaching, and do a better job of attracting them. Because so often we say-- I know I talked to school districts, as well as college presidents, saying that, "We need to increase the number of minorities on the faculty." But the story is, invariably, "We can't find them; they're just not there." But they are there; you have to go look for them.



And I don't know if these districts are doing a good enough job in terms of going out recruiting and finding minority teachers. Because it does make a difference in the classroom, particularly in our urban areas.

Thank you.

DR. ENO: Great story; good personalization of exactly what we're pointing to, in terms of the pipeline. Getting students in at the point of recruitment, and then supporting all along the way so that they make it into the classroom to be that role model.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Have there been any studies and data available comparing the effectiveness of alternate-route teachers with conventional-route teachers? Are they found to be about the same, or is there any data related to it?

DR. ENO: That's a great question; and I don't know, off the top of my head, the data on that.

And I think-- So I think we could find that out. I do know that alternate-route teachers tend to go into Administration at fairly high rates. I don't know that it is necessarily higher, but it is pretty significantly high. And I think that's because career changers are people who select not just a job, but they're selecting a career in education.

But I think we can certainly get you back some data on that.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Well, it's particularly pertinent in the discussion we're having here because, in other words, we're speaking of recruiting alternate-route teachers to go into school systems that seem to have the major problems. And I think in those systems you want to have

the best teachers available that you can, if the children are having problems there. So it's pertinent in that respect.

DR. ENO: So I think you're making a good point; and I think we do want our most effective teachers to serve our students with the greatest needs.

But I would also just say that we want a diverse teacher workforce for every student. We think that diversity in all schools is critical. So just to tag that on.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Right.

Senator Turner just suggested that there are minority and teachers of color available out there; but as I see it, it seems the problem is there is not an adequate supply. I haven't heard any reports about large numbers of teachers of color unemployed out there; in other words, available for hiring. It might be you have a limited supply and there's a battle over who can get them; but my impression is, there's not a backlog of minority or teachers of color looking to try and find a job.

DR. ENO: I think that would be fair to say.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And therefore, this problem goes back to, again, college -- getting them to go to college; or else the alternate route -- one of the two -- to get more people interested in it in order to make the supply available to meet the demand.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senator Thompson.

Thank you to the Department.

As I ask-- Thank you.

I'm going to ask Mr. Daniel Weisberg, from TNTP, to come up.

I know that there are several bills that have been formulating. I do have one that is a loan forgiveness bill, that I think we have to make a genuine effort -- I think the State, way before our time here -- to encourage people to go into the teaching profession; and do a loan forgiveness program for the Higher Ed time frame, if they committed to a certain amount of years. And that's something that we should really take a look at. It's a great commonsense approach that is not an expenditure of money, but I view it as an investment in resources.

It's already noon, my friends. So if you have long testimonies-- I just want to get to the core of where we can really have a fruitful conversation.

Thank you for joining us, Dan.

Oh, sorry; it's 11 a.m. I'm an hour ahead. (laughter) I just came back from Puerto Rico; so, okay that works.

**DANIEL WEISBERG:** I was going to start speaking really fast there, Senator. (laughter)

**SENATOR KEAN:** There in Bermuda, we were trying to figure out where you just got back from, right?

**MR. WEISBERG:** Thank you so much, Senators, Madam Chairwomen, for the opportunity to be part of this really important conversation.

My name is Dan Weisberg; I'm the CEO of TNTP, which is a national education nonprofit founded by teachers. Over the last two decades we've partnered with school systems across the country to recruit and train more than 50,000 teachers.

I really applaud you, Senators, for holding this hearing today. The lack of diversity in our teacher workforce, and our educator workforce generally, is really an urgent problem, as you've already heard today. But I can tell you -- from the point of view of a practitioner in the field -- it is a problem where we can make significant progress, even in the short-term.

A teacher's impact is partly a question of skill; we all know that. As with all professionals, some teachers have taken important steps over the last few years to acknowledge and act on that fact.

But a wave of recent studies -- some of which I'm going to talk a little bit about -- have shown how much a teacher's background and life experience matters, too; especially for students of color, who find themselves shortchanged at almost every turn in our education system. When students of color have teachers of the same race, they are less likely to be suspended, more likely to be referred to gifted programs, and more likely to enroll in college.

Our own research has found that teachers of color have higher expectations -- 31 percentage points higher -- for students of color; and that those higher expectations correlate with accelerated student learning.

Yet the racial disparity between students and the teacher workforce across the country is large and it's growing, just as it is here in New Jersey. While more than half of K to 12 students in the U.S. are students of color, more than 80 percent of teachers are white. The numbers are nearly identical here, as we've heard.

If you are -- and we've heard some of the Senators here in the panel, and we've heard from some witnesses -- if you're a black or Latinx student, there's a real chance you might go through your entire K to 12

careers without having even one teacher who matches your background, who has walked in your shoes.

It's tempting to put the onus for closing this diversity gap on school districts, or even individual principals. After all, they're the ones who decide which teachers to hire. But they can only choose from the teachers that preparation programs send them; a group that is overwhelmingly white, year after year, especially those from schools of education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, almost three-quarters of teacher candidates in traditional education schools are white.

In other words, we're never going to diversify teaching until we diversify teacher preparation. To do that, we need to overcome three obstacles.

First -- and we've touched on this a little bit -- is the high cost of becoming a teacher. In New Jersey, and most other states, it costs upwards of \$20,000 in tuition for coursework and degrees that, generally, research shows are not correlated with effectiveness. And other fees -- we heard from Ms. Jones earlier, who took the Praxis 13 times -- that meant -- I just checked with her in the audience -- she spent almost \$2,000 just on Praxis fees. This price tag keeps untold numbers of talented people from even considering teaching, and lowers the diversity in the profession, because the group that can afford it is disproportionately white. The size of your checking account has nothing to do with your ability to help kids learn, and it shouldn't determine whether you become a teacher.

The second roadblock is a lack of real commitment across the field to diversity in the teacher preparation space, and especially in higher education. It stems from the wrongheaded, but pervasive, excuse that we

can't enroll more people of color in our programs unless we lower our standards. In fact, there is an enormous number of black and Latinx college graduates, and other graduates of color, who'd be perfectly qualified to pursue teaching. The problem is, we're not doing the work to recruit them into the profession; meaning, our kids are missing out on being taught by thousands more outstanding teachers of color every year.

When I look at large universities -- including here in New Jersey -- in or near urban areas, whose education schools only enroll 10 or 15 percent people of color despite all the resources at their disposal, it's hard for me to believe that they're truly making diversity a priority. Making diversity a priority is more than just having a boutique program here, or going to a meeting there. It's about what are you producing; what is the quality and what is the diversity you're producing? We are generally not holding these programs accountable for doing so.

Finally, we need to fix certification rules that routinely screen in ineffective teachers, and disqualify effective teachers; exactly the opposite of what they're supposed to do. We're relying on standardized tests that disproportionately screen out people of color. Nationally, the pass rates for the Praxis, one of the most common exams, are 20 percentage points lower among Latinx test takers and 40 percent lower among black test takers compared to white candidates. It would be one thing if your score on a certification exam strongly predicted how well you could teach. But abundant research shows that scores on these tests are a weak predictor of classroom performance.

One study found that an African American teacher who failed Praxis would produce more learning among African American students than

a white teacher who had passed Praxis. That is how profound the effect is of having diversity in the classroom and having students of color who have teachers who match their background.

I understand the cognitive dissonance this might cause. After all, if you're a great teacher -- like Ms. Jones -- why would you ever fail a math or a reading test? Still, we see it happening all the time. Every year, in our own programs across the country, we see teachers who earn top marks from their principals, who lead their kids to big academic gains, but who are at risk of losing their jobs because of Praxis scores.

And we see plenty of teachers who pass their exams with flying colors, but struggle in the classroom to actually help kids to learn.

We need to acknowledge that the system is broken, and fix it so that great teachers who haven't passed certification exams can continue to serve our children; and so we can move past the false choice -- the false choice between high standards and diversity. We can, and should, work towards both at the same time.

There are steps I would say, Senators, that you can take at the State level to help solve all three of these challenges. You can reduce financial barriers to teaching by supporting innovative, lower-cost pathways into the classroom. For example, several school systems across the country are developing programs that allow paraprofessionals to become full-time teachers. We have almost a million paraprofessionals across the country; many have four-year degrees, many have two-year degrees, many have college credits. We do a terribly poor job of providing pathways for paraprofessionals into professional jobs as teachers.

SENATOR RUIZ: Dan, could you-- Because this is where it gets good for us to-- How exactly can you do that?

MR. WEISBERG: I'll be very specific, Senator.

Paraprofessionals are working, every day, with children under the supervision of certified teachers. If we put structure around their learning, their on-the-job learning, and gave them credit both, in some cases, towards a college degree--

SENATOR RUIZ: Oh, I see.

MR. WEISBERG: --for successfully completing that on-the-job training, while they're being paid as paraprofessionals; but also credit towards their certification -- now you're creating a real pathway for folks who are in the low-income category. But here's the key, Senator. This is not just, "Gosh, how do we open up--" This is not simply workforce development, although I think it's very promising as workforce development; it also gives us a way -- because we can monitor what happens when these paraprofessionals are actually working with kids -- to have a much more meaningful performance screen. Every paraprofessional is not going to be successful at helping all kids to learn. But as we watch them, and monitor them, and evaluate them working with kids, we can determine, to a much greater degree than whether they pass Praxis or, frankly, whether they are taking course work in our education schools, whether they are going to be an effective teacher. That's how you would have to do it. And we would need changes -- I haven't analyzed this -- probably changes in laws; certainly changes in regulations to do that.

Yes, Senator.



SENATOR TURNER: There are many kinds of professions that have paraprofessionals. So what particular paraprofessionals are we talking about?

MR. WEISBERG: So, I mean, paraprofessionals fill many, many roles--

SENATOR TURNER: I mean, it could be police, fireman--

MR. WEISBERG: --many of them, Senator, are there to support kids with special needs; and so they may be written into Individualized Education programs. Some of them are in pre-K.

SENATOR TURNER: Okay.

MR. WEISBERG: So they really are varied; but there is a large number of them-- Again, they are working for-pay in funded positions. So Senator Ruiz, you mentioned before the issue of budget. This is funding that already exists within school systems to pay for these positions. We could harness that talent; they are a much more diverse group. They obviously are passionate about teaching kids; they're in schools. They are a much more diverse group, much more likely to live in the communities that are served than our teacher workforce. And we do a very poor job of creating real pathways for these folks to become teachers.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Turner.

I'm sorry, Dan; but we're going to-- Because we're right here, in the key of the meat here, so we want to be able to have a more fluid conversation.

Senator Turner.

SENATOR TURNER: I agree with you, as far as *growing our own*, so to speak -- utilizing paraprofessionals to become teachers.

I know that it has been particularly successful here in the City of Trenton. Many of the paraprofessionals have gone on to take courses and to become certified teachers. And as a result, they have a rapport with the students, as well as the parents; because they are part of the community. They live in the City; whereas a lot of -- most of the other teachers, regardless of color, live in the suburban districts.

So it is very important that we utilize that talent and that connectedness that they have to our cities and our communities. And this is where the rubber meets the road; they work here, they know the students, they know the parents, and they also pay taxes in our cities. They don't take those paychecks out to the suburbs to spend the money that they get in these urban areas.

MR. WEISBERG: Yes, Senator, I agree.

And you can imagine-- I'm not familiar with the programs here in Trenton; but you can imagine partnerships with institutions of higher education in the community that create some programming -- co-create some programming with school districts so that paraprofessionals are really getting prepared to be outstanding teachers, at the same time they are getting course credit towards a degree for that.

And then we have such a win-win scenario, where you have hardworking people, who are looking to move up the economic ladder, benefiting from getting a degree, in many cases that they just didn't have the wherewithal to get otherwise. But also creating a huge new pipeline.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MR. WEISBERG: It's not just about figuring out how we take the pie that exists now of talent; it's about how you expand that pie. And

this, to me, is an obvious place to look in order to expand the talent in the pipeline.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Let me say, that's an excellent idea, and it solves several problems. Because it involves getting people who live in the community involved, and getting them paid for what they want to do. That's excellent.

Thank you so much for that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes, we were just having a sidebar here. And it's -- the teacher doesn't necessarily live in the community; but the paraprofessional is almost always a neighborhood person.

MR. WEISBERG: But Madam Chairwoman, just as one quick point that's pertinent, if I could.

SENATOR RUIZ: No, keep going through your recommendations. We just wanted to--

MR. WEISBERG: Oh, yes; thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MR. WEISBERG: The story we heard -- and it was a very powerful story from Ms. Jones, a teacher at North Star -- I would not sit here and tell you -- the research does not reflect that Praxis results are totally random. There is a large percentage, no doubt, of teachers who are not able to pass Praxis who would not be effective teachers, and we would not want to certify them; maybe 50 percent, maybe 60 percent. The problem is, we can't afford to lose that 50 or 40 percent of teachers who can't pass the Praxis, who are effective, who are disproportionately people of color, who are getting false negatives. And so, what do you do?

We are not advocating for eliminating test certification exams. What we're saying is, you can create alternate pathways to certification for teachers who can't -- and Senator Ruiz, I think you suggested just this, and I would definitely encourage the discussion of this -- for teachers who aren't passing the certification exams, if they are in situations like at North Star where's there's a very rigorous performance screen.

We do this in our own programs across the country. In order to complete our program and get certified, you have to pass a very rigorous performance screen based on observations of your classroom performance, based on student surveys, based on principal evaluations, based on test scores when we have them. And not everybody makes it past our screening. But the people who do make it past our screening really deserve to be certified teachers; and if they are 8 or 2 points short on Praxis, they can't be. There ought to be, as you said, Senator, a portfolio approach; where those folks who aren't getting certified through the normal route can demonstrate that they are effective, frankly in ways that are going to be more powerful than Praxis.

So thank you; I know you have limited time. I very much appreciate your hearing today, and letting me be part of this discussion.

SENATOR RUIZ: Would that conclude your recommendations, Dan?

MR. WEISBERG: Yes--

SENATOR RUIZ: Because we interrupted you.

MR. WEISBERG: No, no; and please, I'm an old trial lawyer. I'm used to being interrupted, so please interrupt away.

The only other recommendation-- So there's a recommendation on cost that we talked about; there's a recommendation on certification.

There's a recommendation on just recruiting and diversity. And I would say, when you look here-- And the beauty is, all this information is completely, publicly available under Title II, U.S. Department of Education. You can look up any alt-route provider; you can look up any university provider and see what their diversity numbers are. And when you look in the State of New Jersey and you see some programs with majority candidates of color, and some programs with very, very few, the level of impact and commitment varies. And so the other recommendation would be to raise up that information; encourage all teacher preparation programs to set goals, as you've heard about; and to monitor whether they are hitting these goals.

The talent is out there. We have seen this in our programs across the country -- a majority of our candidates are candidates of color. All it took to increase the diversity of our pipeline significantly, in a short period of time, was to be focused on the goal, was to have specific recruiting strategies, and to be transparent about whether we meet the goal or not.

So the third recommendation would be to increase the transparency around progress or lack of progress among additional programs. Lift up those programs that are doing a great job of having high standards and high diversity -- we have them here in New Jersey -- and help those programs that are really lagging to develop some better strategies.

Thank you so much; I really appreciate it.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you so much.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Dr. Monika Williams Shealey, from Rowan College.

**M O N I K A W I L L I A M S S H E A L E Y, Ph.D.:** Good morning, Senators.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I've provided for you a folder filled with information about the work we're engaged in at Rowan.

I'm proud to serve as the Dean of the College of Education; and I am also honored that you have provided space for us to talk about this persistent national problem.

This year at Rowan University we are celebrating 95 years of excellence in educator preparation. When I arrived at the University in 2013, from the University of Missouri in Kansas City, I learned that I was the first African American Dean of the College of Education. Last month I was named Senior Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to build a Division that will address compliance, student support programs, recruiting and retaining diverse faculty across the University; as well as working with faculty in their development and learning.

I understand the significance of this problem, and we have a great deal of work to do university-wide. Our teacher candidates spend two years taking courses outside of the College of Education, and we lose a number of interested diverse students before they take one class in the College of Education.

For this reason, I reached out to Tanisha Davis at the New Jersey Department of Education last year, in an effort to bring together all

of the constituents in the state to address awareness; but also share promising practices in diversifying the teacher workforce.

In October of last year, we co-sponsored the Convening with our Committee members from Montclair University, William Paterson University, and the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. The Convening brought together over 100 individuals -- P through 12 teachers, county college professionals, as well as educator preparation programs. We had the opportunity to explore many of the issues that we're discussing today.

So I would like to tell you what we're actually doing.

We heard about some of the promising practices, like the residency model and alternate certification, alternate route to teaching. We're actually implementing that. We have used funding -- our external funding from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Grant and the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Grant -- to implement the residency model. And now it's just how we prepare teachers, particularly in areas such as math and science.

We are launching the Camden Residency Project in the fall. Teacher candidates will spend a year in Camden; the District will pay them \$4,000 in the areas of Elementary Education, and math, and science. And the math and science candidates will leave our program with a MA in STEM Education.

We also have the ASPIRE program, our alternate route program, that provides teachers across South Jersey.

The second national promising practice that we've implemented is a Grow Your Own Program. We have Teacher Academies across South Jersey in high schools; we've extended our Teacher Academy to offer the

summer Urban Teacher Academy in districts like Bridgeton, Pleasantville, and Camden. These students complete courses, and field and clinical experiences; and they also receive stipends. We track them, follow them, help them to enter our Teacher Preparation Program, or any teacher preparation program in the state.

I'd like to also highlight what has become a national program that started right here in New Jersey -- Project Increasing Male Practitioners and Classroom Teachers. This unique recruitment and retention program is for students from diverse backgrounds -- male students who are entering the field of teaching. These male students -- now over 30 students -- are enrolled in our teacher preparation program. They receive financial support in the form of academic scholarships. They receive housing support; they live on campus in living and learning communities.

We have a Men of Color Network; over 30 men -- teachers, principals, superintendents -- around the state, who commit to mentoring these students; formal mentoring once a month; informal mentoring and texting almost daily. These mentors help these students to navigate a predominantly white institution; help them to address their own socio-emotional development as a first-generation college student; as well as expose them to problems of practice that these administrators, teachers, and leaders are facing every day in their schools.

I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the barriers that we've already heard.

Yes, Praxis Core is a major barrier for us at Rowan University; not just for our students of color, but for a large number of students. But,



disproportionately, we lose students in the first two years of their time at Rowan University.

When I arrived we conducted a study to find out where those diverse students were going. Were they leaving the University, were they changing their major? If they were changing their major, what fields were they going into? I found a large number of our students in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The top two majors they selected were Sociology and Law and Justice.

We have students of color who enter our University prepared to be social change agents, committed to equity and diversity; and they are selecting fields where they believe they can make an impact. Education is one of these fields. But we lose them, a number of them, because they face significant challenges -- again, not just Praxis Core; because of the experiences they may have, university-wide, before they even get to the College of Education.

We have developed a Praxis Lab, and hired a teacher recruiter. His job is to recruit students of color; to go into middle schools and high schools, helping us develop academies, rebranding education, and sharing the opportunities that we have at Rowan University.

We have a Praxis Bootcamp. We offer our services free to county college students, because a large number of our diverse candidates are coming from our county colleges, such as Rowan College at Burlington County and Rowan College at Gloucester County.

We have also implemented the flexibility rule that the New Jersey Department of Education allows for Praxis II; but that rule doesn't benefit the students who we're targeting.

I'd like to thank you again for this opportunity. And I would love to host you at Rowan University, if you'd like to meet our students and staff, and learn more about our work.

Thank you so much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Dr. Shealey.

I, unfortunately, was not able to attend a kick-off event you had promoting this. We did have staff that was down there. I look forward to going down and making a visit.

But it seems that you really have the scale model for what we're talking about here. I mean, you're back into the high schools; you're doing support systems; you're creating financial incentives, you're coaching, you're boot-camping -- you're doing everything ahead.

How long have you been at Rowan?

DR. SHEALEY: I'm in my fifth year.

SENATOR RUIZ: I'm just curious; and this is just-- And this initiative started when?

DR. SHEALEY: All of these programs started when I arrived.

SENATOR RUIZ: See how important that is; I mean, it's critical. I don't want to say, for a fact, that if someone else was there that it wouldn't happen. But I think the more inclusive we are in every workspace the greater our policy becomes afterwards, because we lend a different lens. You're doing phenomenal work.

My question to you would be, since you have kind of this system in place, what is it that we can do to help support this?

DR. SHEALEY: I'm glad you asked.

I'd first like to acknowledge that the College of Education at Rowan had a commitment to social justice and equity before I arrived. I saw it on paper; but my question was, to the faculty and staff, where's the evidence of our commitment?

And that's what we worked on for the last five years: sharing and building the case for why our commitment is important. The funding for all of our programs comes from the University. I met with President Houshmand, and said, "We have a diversity statement; we have a commitment to diversify our undergraduate student population. I have an opportunity for you to demonstrate how committed we are to this issue."

So that finding, again, is institution-focused. What we find from our students -- I heard the stories of students taking the Praxis 12, 13 times -- we have those stories. I have an e-mail in my in-box, right now, from one of our IMPACT students saying, "Dean Shealey, I want to take the Praxis in February. If I don't, I can't go into my professional portion of my program. I failed Readings two times; I need to take it again. Do you have funding for me? I have to go home this weekend and beg my mom, and I know she's going to say no."

So the reality is that the expenses that our students incur trying to be teachers, and then the pay that we then provide for them -- where they have to get a second job, they can't afford a home -- it's embarrassing and it's a stain on our country and state that we don't support teachers through loan forgiveness; that we don't provide support for them in terms of additional scores in Praxis. For example, ETS offers our institution 10 waivers for the Praxis exam.

SENATOR RUIZ: Dean, do you know how much it is to take the test?

DR. SHEALEY: Over \$100.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

DR. SHEALEY: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

DR. SHEALEY: So we receive-- We have over 3,000 students in the College of Education, and 10 waivers each month that ETS provides. That waiver means that students don't have to pay for that exam. Actually, we have hundreds of students applying for the 10 waivers; and so we don't have the funding internally to be able to support students in taking the exams.

Now we are implementing the *edTPA* performance assessment measure. That measure is required for certification, and costs approximately \$300. If students fail, they'll have to pay to take that performance assessment measure again.

We created a document that outlines all of the fees that our students are incurring, based on Praxis I, Praxis Core, Praxis II, edTPA; and then taking a year of clinical experience without having a job during the day to be able to support themselves. The Camden residency model -- the \$4,000 is an incentive. We don't know how long those funds will be available through the District of Camden; but we hope that there is some funding available that will be able to sustain this work, and expand it as well.

The recent grant opportunity that the New Jersey Department of Education offered for us to build capacity, and recruitment, and

retention -- Rowan applied for that funding, but funding was not provided to South Jersey at all.

We have black and Latinx students in urban, suburban, and rural settings who we can support and get into our programs. But the limited funding -- it really prevents our reach from being as deep as it should be.

So yes, I'm an advocate for high standards in teaching. I don't want someone off the street teaching our children who can't demonstrate they have competency in reading and math. We want the best and the brightest. But there has to be some flexibility that doesn't have the unintended consequences of keeping diverse candidates out of this field.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Any questions or comments?

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I just want to say -- you know, Rowan has come a long way. We've been hearing, for a while now, about some of the things that they've been doing. But this is an excellent program.

I'm always concerned about making sure that we also have men in the classrooms. So with the people who you are bringing on -- more students who are going forward with education -- are they mostly women or are you, in some way, encouraging men to be a part of this?

DR. SHEALEY: In your folder you'll find a description of *Project Increasing Male Practitioners and Classroom Teachers*. That program we started at Rowan about four years ago. We are recruiting for our fourth cohort. We have over 30 young men coming from all over New Jersey, not

just South Jersey; some are coming from out of state. We provide academic scholarships; we provide housing. They live and learn together in our residence halls. They attend monthly sessions. These cohorts are going out into schools; and all districts -- urban, rural, and suburban -- are calling and saying, "When are they graduating? We want to hire them."

With our first cohort, I was hoping to just get 15 to 20 students to fill a class. We had over 60 young men who said, "I want to be a teacher." We hold group interviews, in three different regions in New Jersey, to interview the students -- have them interview together so they understand how this work is a collective work and not an individual exercise. And every year we have to turn young men away because of our limited funding.

So any support that you can provide in building to scale the promising practices we've implemented would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

And let me also say I was speaking to -- having a sidebar when you did your introduction. I was just told that you already said this.

DR. SHEALEY: That's okay; I can say it as many times as you need.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: It's such good news, I think you can say it several times.

DR. SHEALEY: I agree.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: You know, one of the things that we could possibly do is try to put in a budget resolution to try to help

you out. That's not something that we can guarantee, but certainly it's something we can look at it--

DR. SHEALEY: I understand; thank you so much.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: --for all higher eds that are doing the same kinds of things.

DR. SHEALEY: And we have shared all of our work with the New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Education -- with our colleagues. We don't want this just to be a Rowan-South Jersey initiative; we want this work to be replicated. We shared it nationally; at the Convening, we had individuals from Florida, Texas, and California to come and learn about the initiatives we started. So we're happy to share.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you. That's very good, and we're hoping that more people would do the same thing.

Thank you very much; and continue to share.

DR. SHEALEY: Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: That's important.

Now it's time for New Jersey City University.

**L O U R D E S S U T T O N, Ed.D.:** Good morning.

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to speak with you about issues we find very important in New Jersey, and in teacher preparation.

My name is Lourdes Sutton, and I am the Associate Dean for the College of Education at New Jersey City University.

New Jersey City University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution and a Minority Serving Institution. Our mission is to provide a diverse population of learners with an excellent education.

I would like to talk with you today about an entry requirement for teacher education in New Jersey, the Praxis Core, which we believe conflicts with our mission and hinders our ability to provide access and opportunity to the diverse population of students who come through our doors every year.

In fall 2015, the New Jersey Department of Education mandated an ETS-developed entry exam for Education majors called *Praxis Core*. Since then, colleges and universities across New Jersey have seen a steady decline in the number of students entering Education programs.

The Core is quite costly, making it prohibitive for many of our lower income students. It is also a long, stressful test, often requiring multiple retakes; which imposes additional financial burden on our already struggling students.

We believe Praxis Core, as an entry requirement, is a disservice to our diverse population of aspiring teachers. Barring them from entering our teacher education programs until they pass the Core keeps them from our faculty, who can help with support, resources, and instruction. If they cannot get to us, we cannot help them.

NJCU data shows that our overall teacher candidate enrollment has dropped 82 percent since 2012. As a highly diverse campus, this percentage represents a large number of students of color. We view the Core as a significant boundary to diversifying the teacher pipeline. By 2024, 56 percent of our P-12 learners will be students of color. If current trends in teacher preparation continue, this will not be true of our teacher workforce which, in 2016, was 82 percent white.



Eliminating or modifying the use of the Core can, with assistance--

SENATOR RUIZ: Dr. Sutton, can you go back to that stat, with the percentage -- 82 percent drop-off? Do you know why that happened?

DR. SUTTON: In our enrollment?

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

DR. SUTTON: Well, I mean, part of it is, we believe, largely due to Core, which was not put in place until 2015. But we were already starting to see that decline beginning in 2012. I mean, I think a lot of -- there are a lot of factors -- respect for the profession, pay. I think there are a lot of things that--

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay; thank you.

Sorry.

DR. SUTTON: You're welcome; no, that's fine.

I just don't know where I left off.

Eliminating or modifying the use of the Core can, with the assistance of our expert faculty, help our students realize their dream of becoming teachers. Many of our neighboring states have already responded to the negative impact of Praxis Core. Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut have either discontinued the Core or have moved towards using it as a diagnostic tool.

We would not be opposed to using Praxis Core as a diagnostic tool, as it provides us with more data to improve our own instruction and better support our students. Using it as an entry requirement, however, will continue to pose barriers in our efforts to diversify our teacher workforce.

It will result in future teacher shortages and teacher demographics that simply do not mirror that of our K-12 learners.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

Brandi, are you next? Who's next?

**BRANDI WARREN:** No, I'm last.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Oh, okay; great.

**MARY McGRIFF, Ed.D.:** Good morning.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Good morning.

DR. McGRIFF: I am Dr. Mary McGriff, and I am a faculty member at New Jersey City University.

And from my role as a specialist in literacy development, and as someone who prepares teachers to serve in our schools, I would like to let you know something of what we're attempting to do to recruit and support culturally diverse prospective teachers.

For recruitment, this year we started a dual enrollment course for high school seniors interested in the field of education; and we're currently offering this in West New York, and we have plans to expand on that.

We currently run a Teacher Intern Program -- which is a residency program; you've heard that mentioned a couple of times earlier this morning -- one that allows our perspective Education majors to earn as they learn.

And we're also launching Males of Color in Teaching, which is a mentoring program that includes male teacher mentors from Jersey City schools.

These are positive recruitment efforts; but for students who have a passion to become a teacher, there is still the Praxis Core that stops so many before they get a chance to matriculate into our programs and courses.

To try to address this significant obstacle, we have written two courses for freshmen and sophomores that satisfy the University's General Education requirements and that also provide explicit teaching of concepts and strategies needed for the Praxis Core.

For many of our students -- and specifically for our culturally diverse students -- these measures do help. However, time is the biggest consideration; and there is no getting around the fact that reading and writing proficiently at the college level requires time to read and write proficiently at the college level.

The Praxis Core, by contrast, gives us a three- to four-semester time clock on when students need to be *not proficient* in these skills, but rather able to *demonstrate mastery* of them in a timed, expensive, and highly stressful context that's far removed from the authentic reading and writing situations that one would often find in college courses.

We have measures in place at NJCU to promote greater diversity among New Jersey's teachers. It's just that we could do so much more without that time constraint of the Praxis Core.

Thank you for your consideration.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Thank you.

Ladies, I'm going to ask you that you not read your presentation, if possible. Because in the interest of time, we still have other speakers.

Thank you.

MS. WARREN: Good morning, Senators.

Having heard from my colleagues, I don't expect you to recall any of the statistics that they've shared, or deliver any of their details.

I simply ask that you remember Jamal.

Jamal was not an actual student, but he represents every black and brown student whose pursuit of a teaching career was abruptly halted by Praxis Core.

Jamal also represents the ethnic minority, whose aspirations for a career in education never took flight because Praxis Core simply left them taxiing on the tarmac.

The U.S. Department of Education projections for 2024 are that 56 percent of our nation's students will be students of color; yet, an alarming 82 percent of those teachers were white. And unfortunately for us in New Jersey, that percentage was a little higher.

If New Jersey is truly committed to changing these statistics, we must directly address program requirements, like Praxis Core. They have shown and proven themselves to be an obstinate and obvious obstruction to what we believe is our shared and common goal of a truly diversified workforce.

If we have another minute, we would like to hear from our student, Barbara Edmond; but I thank you for your time and attention.

SENATOR RUIZ: Brandi, real quick.

Just because we talked about this a little bit -- do you think pursuing a portfolio that has high rigor, in these opportunities, avails itself as a better pathway for some of these certain instances?

MS. WARREN: I'm in complete agreement that an option, such as portfolio process, would be more useful to our students.

Additionally, our students might also benefit from a flexibility rule with the Praxis Core; that is also applied with the Praxis subject assessment.

And if I may, a third option would be, rather than having teacher candidates, whose content matter does not require the material measured by the Praxis Core -- that the test is more aligned to the content they plan to teach.

**BARBARA EDMOND:** Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the challenges I have faced while trying to become a teacher.

My main challenge is the Core.

My name is Barbara Edmond, and I'm here today because the Core is a major obstacle for me, and many of my peers.

I began my college career as an Education major in the EOF program. I knew then, as I know now, that education is my passion. I have worked hard to complete the long checklist of requirements for Education students. After completing all of my Education pre-regs, I took the Core and I failed.

I was devastated; but my advisors encouraged me. They directed me to a number of resources, including a math and writing tutor; but this was not enough. I took the Core again, and I failed again.

After my third attempt, I began to question myself; I considered other careers. The Core caused me to lose sight of my goals to

teach, to instill hope, to inspire, and to love my students unconditionally. But I am determined.

Although I have several classmates who have dropped Education as a major, I am determined to become a teacher.

Thank you.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Senator Turner.

SENATOR TURNER: Yes, I have a question regarding grade point average.

Isn't it a requirement that you have a 3.0 grade point average, as well as passing the Praxis?

MS. WARREN: Yes; 3.0 is the GPA requirement for all teacher candidates. And I am pleased to say that every NJCU intern who begins the clinical component has, in fact, met that requirement.

SENATOR TURNER: So even though the Praxis is required, the grade point average is required as well. Now, the 3.0 grade point average does not pose a barrier to minority students getting into education?

MS. WARREN: We have not experienced that at NJCU; no.

SENATOR TURNER: Okay. But I would think, though, if you have a 3.0 grade point average, you should be able to pass something like the Praxis or any other test.

SENATOR RUIZ: Can I-- And I'll chime in here.

Part of the issue is that, for instance, let's say you want to be a pre-school teacher; and your course work in the higher ed community is focused on Early Childhood Development. I shouldn't use this as an example, because I don't know what that Praxis test looks like. It seems that the Praxis test is focused on -- is very heavily centered on geometry,

which not all students take. And it goes back to-- So I can only speak for myself. If I were to go into the teaching profession, and I wanted to teach English because that was my major -- if I had to take a math component, I could guarantee you that I probably would have failed.

And it dates back to what you're exposed to in your sending school district in high school. And so if you happen to come from an under-performing district that doesn't have strengths in math or sciences, and there are teaching tests that have these measures in them, and you're not getting that reinforced in college because it's not your major -- I could see where the disconnect is.

MS. WARREN: Additionally, with all due respect, as Dr. Sutton stated, NJCU is a Hispanic-Serving Institution. And I don't want our students' ability to perform in the classroom to be compared with their inability to surpass cut scores based on tests that we know are inherently biased.

Thank you.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Madam Chair.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Thompson; I'm sorry. You guys left, and--

SENATOR THOMPSON: I believe they spoke of having practice tests that they can take, and so on.

I wonder if we could get access -- the Committee -- to one of these tests, just to see--

SENATOR RUIZ: Oh, I'm sure, yes. I'm sure we can get copies of them.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I'd like to make that request.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: That would be good.

Thank you, ladies.

ALL: Thank you.

SENATOR TURNER: Madam Chair.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

SENATOR TURNER: I remember when I was at Trenton State College we did have an African American who was a Psychology teacher. And he was discussing the fact that how you score on these tests depends upon who's creating the tests. And African Americans are not involved in creating these tests; so they are created, in a sense, as a way of screening out the majority of people, or the minority of the people.

And he suggested -- he said we should develop a chittlings test and see how many white students pass that test; and you would find and that more minorities would pass the test.

So I think we -- I think it's a good idea, Senator Thompson, that we take a look at that test and truly find out if it is, indeed, culturally biased.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I think you have something there, Senator Turner. Traditionally, African Americans have not passed these kinds of tests. So there might be something there.

SENATOR RUIZ: Next, I'll ask Dr. Thomas Howard, from TCNJ, to come up.

**THOMAS HOWARD, Jr., Ed.D.:** Good morning, all.

My name is Dr. Thomas Howard, and I am the Executive Director for the Center for Future Educators at The College at New Jersey.



I want to thank the Senators for this unique opportunity to speak to you today, and to speak about an area of interest.

I come to the work as a former teacher, principal, and licensed superintendent.

My colleagues have talked quite a bit about the issue of teacher recruitment and retention. And certainly we spoke a lot about the data; and certainly there's a lot of information that really tells us that there's a crisis in the United States, and there's an issue in New Jersey as well.

Our schools are experiencing an increase in student enrollment across the country. Fewer students are choosing college as Education majors, as some of my colleagues have mentioned.

In 2012, there was a national attrition rate of over 238,000 teachers across the country. And so that speaks to a real concern; and New Jersey's no different. In 2014, the turnover rate was 9.27 percent. And so, certainly, there's something that we need to do in order to address it.

And as my colleagues from the Department of Education mentioned, there is a lack of diversity in New Jersey; and there are reasons why that occurs. However, the work at The College of New Jersey and the Center for Future Educators takes an organized, grassroots effort to recruit middle and high school students through a series of experiential learning activities. This work is funded by the New Jersey Education Association, and we certainly appreciate the partnership with them.

And so there are three major initiatives that I'd like to talk about; and the fourth would be a series of initiatives for this year.

Number one: We manage the New Jersey Future Educators Association. Currently, it's a network of 14 middle and high schools, made

up 261 students who are interested in becoming teachers. And so this is a year-round set of experiences for those students, including an annual conference this year, to be held at Monmouth University.

Second, we offer the Tomorrow's Teachers training initiative for teachers, who are now high school instructors, who provide an AP-level course for students who aspire to be teachers. And they also receive one college credit for completion of that, to be honored at William Paterson, Fairleigh Dickerson University, Rowan University, and Rider University.

And the third program that we run out of the Center for Future Educators is the Urban Teacher Academy. And this is an intensive and immersive two-week experience for seniors who want to be teachers. And they end these two weeks with a portfolio of their experience; but also their vision for wanting to become a teacher. This experience focuses on STEM-related science and technology, engineering, and math-related experiences as they work toward their interest to become teachers in an urban school environment.

And then this last set of concepts I want to mention -- we have three key initiatives.

Young Men of Color Leadership Program. I'm working with one of my colleagues, and we're developing a pilot program to recruit 30 mentors and 30 young men of color who want to be teachers and leaders in their community. And, actually, this program was inspired by a conversation that I had with my colleagues at Rowan University.

We're also seeking to promote Teachers as Change Agents to bring a brighter image -- to inspire students to want to be teachers. So

we're recruiting and recognizing teachers who are going beyond the classroom and impacting their communities in various ways.

And the final initiative this year -- we've started collaboration with -- a new collaboration with the Department of Education called the *NJFEA Diversity Initiative*. And this initiative is intended to look at the data, identify where the greatest needs are across the State of New Jersey, and approach school boards and superintendents to execute a series of programs, including the New Jersey Future Educator Association Program for middle and high school, and your Tomorrow's Teacher Program, and recruit students into the Urban Teacher Academy.

And so it's with this portfolio of initiatives that we seek to contribute to the number of, or the pipeline of, students who are interested in becoming teachers.

I learned that approximately -- New Jersey needs approximately 4,000 teachers a year. And so if we were to work backwards, we would have to recruit all over the state -- including those who come into the state to be Education majors -- almost 6,000 kids; with an understanding that a percentage of them may not want to be teachers after having these grassroots-related experiences. But I think that if we invest in these pre-collegiate, grassroots-related experiences, we can now -- with a focus on recruiting students of color, we can do a better job of attracting and bringing students of color into the field of Education.

And so I close by saying that the Center for Future Educators at The College of New Jersey is really excited about our work. But certainly we need more partnerships in order to recruit more students of color into

this work; more funding to continue and expand this initiative to make it a statewide -- to have greater impact statewide.

And so with that said, I just want to thank you for allowing me to speak; and I'll answer any questions that you might have.

SENATOR RUIZ: Are there any questions? (no response)

So my question for you -- and you touched on this at the end -- for us to continue, or to identify resources and funding to support these services.

DR. HOWARD: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: In addition to the Praxis piece.

DR. HOWARD: I'm focusing primarily -- specifically, rather -- on inspiring middle and high school students who want to be teachers; planting that mustard seed of an idea that, "I want to be a teacher," through a series of mentor relationships with experiential learning activities, as they consider the choice of being a teacher.

And I think that if we are touching the minds of these men and women early, that we stand a chance of recruiting more teachers; we stand a chance of recruiting more minority or underrepresented populations, including African Americans, Hispanic, and Asian students. Because the data speaks to a concern in those three subgroups.

And so what do we do to inspire individuals to become teachers? We connect them with early experiences, so they can have that thought in their mind, "This is what I want to do," and then nurture that idea over time.

But in order to expand this work -- certainly funding is really, really important to do this work; and I would say sustaining this funding

over six to eight years. And it's not about funding the program, but it's about funding the initiative to recruit more students into the teaching profession.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Dr. Howard.

Any other questions or comments? (no response)

Thank you very much.

Next, I'll ask Rutgers to--

DR. HOWARD: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Dr. Nora Hyland, from the Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

**N O R A E. H Y L A N D, Ph.D.:** Good morning; or is it afternoon?

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Good afternoon.

DR. HYLAND: I want to thank the members of the Senate Committees on Education and Higher Education for inviting me here today.

My name is Nora Hyland; I'm a Professor and the Associate Dean and Faculty Director of Teacher Education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

SENATOR RUIZ: Do you have campuses-- Where is this? Is it physically located, or is it extended throughout--

DR. HYLAND: New Brunswick.

SENATOR RUIZ: New Brunswick, okay.

DR. HYLAND: So we are at the New Brunswick campus.

So the research on teaching is clear: race matters. And teachers of color do attain better outcomes with students of color; and, in fact, some research indicates that they are rated more positively by students of all races.

Yet in spite of 30 years of efforts to increase the diversity in our teaching workforce, educator diversity has barely budged in the last 30 years nationally; and, in fact, teachers of color are more likely to leave the teaching workforce, usually due to working conditions.

In the State of New Jersey, nearly 50 percent of our students are students of color, and they attend--

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Excuse me.

DR. HYLAND: Yes.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Would you just repeat what you just said? You said because of working conditions--

DR. HYLAND: Largely.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: Could you elaborate a little bit on what that is?

DR. HYLAND: Yes. So most teachers of color work in schools that are highly segregated -- de facto segregated -- and have some of the least experienced school administrators, have difficult working conditions-- Not so much in New Jersey, in terms of funding; but lower funding, less materials, things like that, okay?

Also it's important to note that the New Jersey public school population is among the three most segregated in the nation, according to UCLA's *Civil Project Report* in 2018.

So this set of facts really does demand urgent action; and I applaud you for taking on this topic.

So I want to speak, very briefly, about some of things that we're doing at Rutgers; and then I'd like to provide some broader legislative approaches that I think might be helpful.

The Graduate School of Education is a five-year and post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program; which means we don't offer initial licensure at the undergraduate level. As such, one of the ways that we are hoping to increase our diversity is by beginning to offer an undergraduate teaching credential. And so we have started the process of creating that.

But the other main thing that we have done is, we have designed our program to prepare all of our candidates to teach in New Jersey's diverse classrooms. Two years ago, we redesigned our initial preparation programs as an urban social justice teacher preparation program, focused on recruiting and preparing teachers for economically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse schools. Our program design involves strong partnerships with eight diverse New Jersey public school districts, which we call the *GSE Community School Partnership Network*.

We also support the retention of teachers of color in our partner districts by recognizing the expertise of the teachers of color in our partnered districts, and creating opportunities for them to become clinical faculty and advisors.

Research, as I said, on the attrition of teachers of color suggests that they leave teaching, in part, due to school conditions that thwart their autonomy and devalue their expertise.

Finally, we have been working on pipeline projects, with our partner school districts, to attract P-12 students of color and community members, to begin to consider teaching as a career. We use the term *community-based teachers* to name this effort.

The other thing we have done is, we have increased our faculty diversity. Over the past three years, we've hired nine new faculty members of color; because we feel that that is an essential component of attracting students of color into our programs, but also building strong relationships with our partner public school districts.

So we think the State Legislature could enact several avenues to positively affect teacher diversity.

So I wanted to start by describing some of these policy barriers that some of my colleagues have spoken about; but I want to add a little information.

So candidates in New Jersey must take and pass three commercial, high-stakes teacher licensure exams, all of which disproportionately exclude teacher candidates of color, and they offer little evidence that these exams predict teacher effectiveness.

So the exams you've heard about are the Praxis Core, which is a basic skills admission test to get into a teacher education program. The cost of that is \$150.

The Praxis II is a content-knowledge test that teacher candidates take in order to achieve licensure. The cost of that is between \$120 and \$160.

And then the edTPA is a performance-based test that all candidates must pass for licensure, and that is at a cost of \$300.

Furthermore, almost all educator-- Well, actually all educator preparation programs have mandates for accreditation through CAEP, which is our national accreditation body for teacher education. And those typically require the use of some assessment management program, an



online tool for managing the assessments of students to provide to evidence to CAEP that our programs are meeting our goals and their standards. And that usually adds a fee to students of somewhere around \$100.

So the total cost to most students -- if they pass all these tests the first time around -- is somewhere around \$700. They incur additional costs if they fail some, or all, or portions of this -- of these tests.

So these testing mandates might be worthwhile if they were equitable and if they had a strong predictive validity to the teaching practices that we know to be important and influential for student learning.

However, researchers -- including my colleagues Dr. Drew Gitomer and Dan Goldhaber from the American Institute for Research -- suggest that that the relationship between these tests scores and the teaching quality is modest at best; which means they don't have a great predictive validity. The tests that are -- they don't value or track as measures of teaching quality.

Moreover, Drew Gitomer, my colleague at Rutgers, found that the Praxis test actually functioned as a race-based barrier to candidates of color becoming teachers. He found that whites are over twice as likely to pass the Praxis Core, and whites are also more likely to pass the Praxis II. Fifty percent of whites who want to be teachers qualified across the two tests, and only about 15 percent of African Americans qualified across the two tests.

Considering the evidence that teachers of color have a positive influence on students of color, and all students, Gitomer's and Goldhaber's analyses strongly suggest that the Praxis tests lead to a significant negative outcome for both diversity and potential equality of our teaching workforce.

The edTPA, which is the performance-based measure, has better indicators for equity, but the arbitrary cut scores imposed by states that use it as a licensure measure actually consistently privilege white test takers over candidates of color as well.

Other research on the edTPA suggests that it functions as a deterrent for attracting teacher candidates, and that it may, in fact, be a better tool for evaluating the writing competency of edTPA takers than the teaching competency of the takers.

So with all that, I would actually encourage the Committee to consider creating much more flexibility around these measures, and potentially eliminating one or more of the measures to reduce the redundancy of them. The rigorous data that educator preparation programs are required to collect and analyze for CAEP accreditation -- they function to ensure the teacher candidates have basic skills, content-specific knowledge, and teaching performance. We do this, in multiple ways, as part of our accreditation process through CAEP.

The other thing that our accreditation process through CAEP gets at is -- some of the more difficult to measure skills that high-quality teachers bring to classrooms. So my colleague Dan Beatty, recently published a piece, I think in December, in the Harvard Education review, about Elementary math teachers. And those relational interactions between teachers and students have actually a higher predicative nature of student learning than do what we typically consider best practices. And in fact African American teachers had better relational interactions in his study than did white teachers.

So given the relational skills that are so difficult to measure, one of the things that might be useful is to figure out ways and fund and support ways to begin to measure those skills. Right now, we almost entirely rely on academic skills as the gatekeeper to becoming a teacher.

An added bonus to adopting a more flexible policy on these mandated, high-stakes tests is that it would free both the State level folks at the DOE, and educational preparation providers, and teacher candidates would free some of their time and energy and their funds to focus on some of the policy proposals that you have heard from my colleagues here today. Things like loan forgiveness programs, graduate-level scholarships for teacher candidates from low-income communities, or candidates who attended the most segregated P-12 school districts in the state; supporting teacher residencies, which are so valuable; implementing and funding the grow-your-own programs like our community-based teacher programs through district and university partnerships; and incentives -- which I don't think has been mentioned yet -- but incentives for Spanish speakers to enter the teaching pipeline to ensure that the rising number of Latinx students in schools and communities can communicate with their teachers but also that they can begin to retain their heritage language. We know that students who are English Language Learners, who retain their heritage language perform better cognitively and throughout life than those who are forced through subtractive programs to lose their language. We need more linguistically diverse educators.

The other thing is, of course, improving the work lives of teachers of color so that they stay in a profession. We can't keep losing the ones who we have.

So the learning Policy Institute predicts that New Jersey will need to fill nearly 2,000 teaching vacancies in the next six or seven years. And as our population of students of color expands, and our schools serve increasingly segregated communities, we have an imperative to do this work to attract a more diverse teaching staff. And because our students in high poverty and highly segregated settings always bear the brunt of teacher shortages.

So thank you for your time, and I am open to any questions.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Any questions?

Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: You indicate there is data available that shows the rates of disparity on the exam results. Is that correct?

DR. HYLAND: Yes.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I think we would be interested in seeing that.

Additionally, the tests you're speaking of -- are they all administered by the Department of Education, or who administers these tests?

DR. HYLAND: So the two Praxis-- They're all mandated by the Department of Education as tests required for licensure, or admission into teacher preparation programs. The Praxis Core and the Praxis II are ETS exams; and the edTPA, which is the performance assessment, was designed by SCALE, which is a group at Stanford University. But it is executed and scored through Pearson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Has there been any analysis done of the various questions that are asked -- whether there is certain racial disparities in the areas that are being questioned, and so on?

DR. HYLAND: So one of the things that came up before -- I think it was Senator Turner asked a question about why students of color might be scoring lower on some of these tests--

SENATOR THOMPSON: Yes.

DR. HYLAND: --of basic skills, and knowledge, and performance.

So there are a couple of things to note. One, we know that students of colors, including perspective teachers of color, are more likely to be educated in low-performing schools and highly segregated schools, which puts them in an educational disadvantage.

But the other thing that's important to understand about test design is that when you're designing a standardized test, like the Praxis, test designers eliminate test questions that don't perform as predicted. This has-- So what test questions that perform as predicted are those in which students who typically would pass those questions -- or get those questions right -- get them right. So if there are questions in which high numbers of students of color get them correct and high numbers of white students get them incorrect, those test questions are more likely to be eliminated.

So there is a -- because of the tools that educational statisticians use when they create these tests, there is an inherent bias in the test items that wind up on the final test.

Does that make sense?

SENATOR THOMPSON: Yes, but I'm not sure that answered my question.

DR. HYLAND: Okay; I'm sorry.

It occurred to me, when we were discussing--

SENATOR THOMPSON: It's a very simple question.

DR. HYLAND: Okay; so--

SENATOR THOMPSON: You have a test; it has a number of questions on it, etc. Obviously -- I mean, since you know the race, or whatever, of everybody who is taking the exam, you can see if, on this question, there is a disparity related to race, or that question, or so on. And of course, these cover certain topics -- each question.

DR. HYLAND: Yes.

SENATOR THOMPSON: So, thus, has an analysis been done, or should one be done, to see if there are certain areas questions are being asked in -- that this is where racial disparities occur; and if so, why? I mean, is it related to the educational background that they had, or is there something else inherent in the area being covered that causes this?

I think that would be very useful, in looking at whether there is a problem in the test as related to certain groups.

DR. HYLAND: Yes--

SENATOR THOMPSON: And if so, is it pertinent? Is this really something that we need to cover, or is it kind of extraneous? I think that would be very helpful in looking these things over.

DR. HYLAND: So an item analysis of performance on a test is what you're saying.

I don't know if there has been research on that, but I am happy to look and get an answer to you on that.

SENATOR THOMPSON: If somebody could get such a study done, it would be very helpful to what we're considering here.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Any other questions or comments? (no response)

Thank you very much--

DR. HYLAND: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: --for your testimony, your patience.

I'm going to ask Donna Chiera, from the AFL-CIO AFT; and Mr. Sean Spiller to come up, from the NJEA.

As they're making their way up-- Oh, Colleen -- just, very quickly, I wanted to -- and we'll send this in writing -- I wanted to see the data; the DOE had said that even though the tests are getting harder, that you didn't see that minorities were falling off of that radar. Because it seems to be quite different from what we've been hearing here from the other groups. So I would be interested to see that data.

Thank you very much.

Hi, Donna.

**D O N N A M. C H I E R A:** Hi; good afternoon.

My name is Donna Chiera. I'm President of AFT New Jersey.

And it's amazing that we're sitting, again, through an education-related hearing, and so much of the conversation has to do with standardized tests.

I just want that out there.

SENATOR RUIZ: I can debate you on that later; but go ahead.

MS. CHIERA: Thirty-three years I taught in the Perth Amboy Public Schools, and I went through the Perth Amboy Public Schools. And I am an educator because of the result of a Grow-Your-Own program.

I heard people talk about exposing students to education in high school. No offense; that's too late.

I heard one person talk about a middle school. When I was in elementary school -- and I know that was eons ago -- and in 3rd grade, if I volunteered on lunch time to go play with kindergarten kids for *X* amount of periods, I was able to go on a special trip.

In 4th grade, you had to go and read to students. And as you got older, it involved teaching -- tutoring on weekends. By the time I left 8th grade, I knew I wanted to be a teacher, and I knew I wanted to come back to Perth Amboy.

The most successful programs to recruit teachers are the Grow-Your-Own programs. And in my written testimony we talk about places all over the country. We heard about the paraprofessionals -- the teacher pipeline. We heard, in some states, they actually do a parent-to-professional pipeline, with parents who come into school, and volunteer their time, and are interested. And all of these are great, but there are some obstacles in this.

Number one is the cost of higher education. People who volunteer to spend time in schools, and paraprofessionals who are in our communities, are some of the lowest paid people in the educational system. They cannot afford to go to college, even if they want to be a teacher.

Some places--

SENATOR RUIZ: Donna, can you just hold up.



MS. CHIERA: Sure.

SENATOR RUIZ: Can you give me the average for the paraprofessionals? It's in the \$20s, isn't it?

MS. CHIERA: It's in the \$20s.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MS. CHIERA: And when you look at the cost of higher ed-- And most of these people are parents; they can either be single mothers-- They're working in the school, and they have kids of their own. And you're not only talking about tuition, but you're talking about the time to have to travel to an institution of higher education and the work that they have to do.

When you form these partnerships with higher ed -- I know we were successful in Amboy, at one time, where we had Middlesex County College -- because our paras needed to pass the ParaPro -- they actually came to the district; and after school they went and had classes after school for the paras.

The District negotiated a reduced tuition rate for those teachers. We did this, again, with elementary school teachers when we needed math -- we needed stronger math teachers. We created the partnerships; we negotiated a reduced tuition. The District agreed to pay all fees and tuition, which cost the District a lot of money.

But instead of having to drive there, they came to the District; they had their classes in some of our classrooms after school, and it really promoted this issue.

So I'm looking at my notes, and I'm trying to get through.

Senator Cunningham talked about exposing -- students getting exposed to teachers of color. I can tell you, as an elementary school teacher-- And in most cases, most elementary school children see their first male teacher when they hit 5th grade; maybe 4th grade -- besides the gym teacher and the principal.

And my first teacher of color was Mr. Knapp (phonetic spelling), my 7th grade Science teacher.

So when we talk about diversity, we need to look at diversity not only as an ethnic thing; but we need to look about, how do we get more male teachers in our elementary schools and pre-schools. Because male teachers who tend to teach young grades seem to have this -- people perceive them, "Why do want to teach young kids?" And our young students need them, so we need to expand that.

We need to partnership with higher ed. But the other thing we need to partnership-- Because we talk about teachers leaving the profession. I could tell you -- there needs to be a conversation where higher ed, and people who are actually in the classroom teaching, have conversations. Because so many people leave those first three years because they say, "My God, they didn't teach me this in higher ed." Theory is good, but there needs to be practical application. I often say our students didn't go through the theory courses, so they don't know how they're supposed to react. And people who do not have that experience, really, when it comes to working with real students and real classrooms, are unprepared.

The cost of the system I went-- We need to figure out how to get teachers -- those people going through the education system -- an opportunity-- They're incurring high costs; they just can't-- The student

teaching, especially when you're doing your Grow-Your-Own-- Paraprofessionals and parents who go that route can't afford to take a semester off or a year off from their job to do student teaching. Most places, including internationally -- when people are going through the system, they work -- we call them *student teachers*, we call them *student practitioners* -- they work as interns in the schools, and they get paid for it. Because now I'm not losing a salary if I want to make this my second career.

Recruiting a diverse workforce is really important; and people gave you statistics on that. Retaining a diverse workforce-- And someone hinted to it that most of our diverse workforce goes into urban settings, where they are underfunded and understaffed. The students in those settings may be more difficult; you have more ELL students, you have more Special Ed students involved. And they're not supported.

We do a lot to support teachers that first year with mentoring; sometimes mentoring goes into the second year. I don't know why people think, after two years, you magically know everything you need, and you don't have supports. School districts need to set up a longer mentoring program; if not a mentoring program, a support group for teachers. All of this could be done with labor-management collaboration.

My concern is that we are focusing on this now; we are going to look at a quick fix to get diverse teachers in our classroom. We're going to have a check point compliance on QSAC, where districts are going to say, "Yes, we're recruiting more diverse teachers." But it's going to be either weakened-- We need to make sure-- I know people have concerns about the Praxis; and I agree. However, we need to make sure that we keep the

standard and the quality of those who are going into our classrooms at a high level. We cannot reduce it just to get a quick fix.

SENATOR RUIZ: Donna, I just want to stop you there.

I don't think that's-- I don't know what quick fix you're looking at, but this is not going to happen, as far as I see, any time soon.

MS. CHIERA: No--

SENATOR RUIZ: And at no point, coming from me -- since you were talking about the standardized test-- We will always stay with high rigor and high standards, because that's critically important. What we are trying to look at, systemically, is how we can create more pathways to get to that point, because it's indicative that we have the high-standard, high-rigor individual who is still finding an obstacle.

So I think this is a comprehensive approach; it's going to take a while. We have to do loan forgiveness. I don't know if we'll ever have an Administration that will sign that; that will take a while. We have to support the teachers and the professionals. We have to pay teachers -- greater amount of funding. We have to change the conversation about someone who says, "I want to become a teacher;" we should all be bowing down to that person, which is going to be a systemic paradigm shift, culturally, that's going to take a very long time.

MS. CHIERA: And I appreciate that; and I do. But I'm talking about -- my years of experience tends to be-- We look for quick solutions, if not on a State level, districts will start hearing about this and start looking for easy way outs. And that's my concern.

And I appreciate-- And if this takes a year or two to put in place because we have so much to discuss here, that's the way we need to

go. I would rather have a longer process to get it right, than a shorter process just to say that we did it. And in all honesty, in education, we tend to do -- we just need to say we're going to do it.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I don't think you have to worry about that in this case. We're all very serious about what we're trying to do here, and we realize that anything good is going to take a minute to be done.

MS. CHIERA: And while we're focusing on getting diverse teachers in our urban areas, I think we also need to also focus to make suburban areas also a diverse workforce. Because when you have a rainbow of teachers in front of you on a daily basis, you learn tolerance, you learn acceptance. And I think that's part of where we are today. As much as we have desegregated schools in many places, we still have some segregation through no fault of anyone; just demographics.

So I think the more exposure we give to all schools -- not just urban centers -- is going to be important. And when we promote this, we need to clearly make sure that we're looking to have an inclusive workforce instead of sending people away.

So I tried to summarize everything I said very quickly.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you; thank you very much.

Thank you.

SEAN M. SPILLER: Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you for your time here today.

Thank you for dealing with this important issue, as we all work to diversify the education workforce here in New Jersey.

I am Sean Spiller; I am a high school Science teacher, and I am also the Vice President of the New Jersey Education Association.

I want to start out by saying, officially, for the record, that of course we support all these efforts. We also support a number of the bills that are already out there to offer pilot programs to try and increase diversity: S-703 and A-3140. We think that is absolutely a step in the right direction.

As my colleague just noted, I think it is also important for us to highlight that we absolutely need to take all steps to ensure that young students have an opportunity to see role models who look like them when they go to school. Also, I think it is important, as my colleague noted, that all students need to see a diverse educational workforce. I think, oftentimes -- and maybe overlooked here and there -- we have to realize that it is important for students who are not of color to see people of color in leadership positions; to see them in educational leadership positions. That is just as important as those role models for students of color. So I wanted to make sure we stressed that as well.

I think you've heard, certainly before, from a lot of our higher education colleagues, a lot of the numbers that support why this is important. Yes, for student achievement; yes, again, to have role models; yes, also, for students of non-color to see role models of color in these positions, leadership positions -- all those reasons, and all the data is there.

But also -- as has been emphasized by so many -- there has to be an important emphasis, certainly, on the educational program, in terms of the content that's -- what's put out. The Department of Education talked about culturally responsive teaching. When we talk about that, that

has to happen at the K through 12 areas. We have to have students who learn, from the start, that they're not being ignored when they're taught. We have to include that in our teacher preparation programs, so that they feel included and their voices heard. And, of course, then, they will be also able to be better educators, educating all of our students.

I was happy to hear Dr. Howard talk -- from the Center for Future Educators, as he noted -- and we're thankful for that -- we are one of the big supporters of that program. It is a program that actively recruits students to become educators. But predominantly, we also go into urban areas, or areas that have students of higher concentration of students of color. We go in there, also, with the funding to say, "Look, if there are barriers, like transportation, to get to some of these things that we offer; if there are other barriers that might disproportionately affect communities of bigger socio-economic challenges, we offer those financial opportunities to make sure students can come and take part."

SENATOR RUIZ: So we already heard where you're showing up in pockets of where the work is happening.

Just a generic question. Let's say, for instance, I graduated, you know, Trenton State University (*sic*). And I'm trying to find my way around, and I happen to reach out to the Association just directly. Do you have some kind of a program in place there -- or what happens in that type of circumstance where, perhaps, you come in contact with an individual who is new, doesn't really know how to navigate the system? Do you have a framework?

MR. SPILLER: We do; thank you for that.

We actually do. We have a Minority Leadership Recruitment Committee within our organization, made up of members. They are there, really, to kind of -- obviously, as the name implies -- to recruit educators of color into the profession -- to make sure they're mentored, a lot of the things you've heard today. But that would be where we would direct that new educator to make sure that they did have the supports that were needed; certainly through a lot of the other programs; with -- the Center for Teaching and Learning does it, yes; The College of New Jersey; others-- All the partner organizations also note to, kind of, make sure those people get to us, or get to the right people; or they can direct them as well in many instances.

So we're happy to see that that is an opportunity, an option, for those educators who are coming in -- potential educators.

But I also want to really emphasize -- and I think it's not lost on anyone on this Committee; I've heard it mentioned a number of times -- one of the big issues around all of this has to do with cost, right? It has to do with the expense, whether it be the test taking, and multiple times; whether it be affording now, which we all see is the year-long student teaching at no pay; whether it be college affordability, which we're happy the Governor and you all are working on. All of these things are cost-prohibitive; and unfortunately, when we have many of our communities of color in a lower socio-economic position than other communities, that becomes a bigger barrier. So there has to be a cost piece.

You mentioned, already, here -- and we're happy to hear it -- the loan forgiveness programs; talking about grant opportunities. There could be other lower cost incentives -- allowing educators of color the ability



to transfer to other districts, while retaining many of their seniority rights or, let's say, their tenure rights; or some of these pieces that might be of value but don't have a cost to it.

When we talk about the high cost of the edTPA, you heard the residency programs that were noted here today, where those individuals are paid while that happens. That's an important piece. Again, a cost to it; but it's an important piece because oftentimes these individuals don't have those dollars.

If we're talking about the paraprofessionals -- which were noted before -- I heard two variations there. Certainly, one version was -- we can watch paraprofessionals, and see if they're good educators, and have them become educators. Certainly, we think there's some merit to that; but I think we would all more closely align with the fact that, hey, we need to identify paraprofessionals who would be great educators, put them through the rigor of a great teacher preparation program, offer them the funding, and dollars, and freedom, and ability to do that -- that has a cost to it as well -- then we're making sure we have the high standards, but we also have the individuals in those positions.

So I think we heard a little of that with the paraprofessionals; but, of course, we support one a little bit more over the other.

I have to mention, also-- And I heard a lot of conversation about the salaries that educators are paid; the respect that they're afforded. I agree with all of it, and I thank you for it. I don't think it can be lost on this body -- and all of you, all of us -- that we are facing the biggest crisis right now with the healthcare costs and the impact of Chapter 78. And if there is a way -- right? -- that we're going to keep people in this profession--

SENATOR RUIZ: I've got to love it, I've got to love it, Mr. Spiller.

MR. SPILLER: Right?

SENATOR RUIZ: Go ahead.

MR. SPILLER: You know it. I always say to people -- when I go talk to these educators, it's a hard sell when we say, "This is an important job to come into, but you're going to make less every year doing it," right? We have to fix that. Whatever that dynamic is, we can't keep paying them less.

So we're seeing more and more people when they come in -- and to a lot of what others have noted before -- when you're looking for that first job, you're looking for a high-paying job; and you have a lot of student debt, and you have a year-long process without pay as a student-teacher -- all those things factoring in -- you might not have the financial stability at home, where you can live at home with a parent, or whatever other pieces are there. If you're telling them now, "You're going to come in, and your first job is going to start at \$42,000; and by the way, next year, because of healthcare costs, you're at \$41,500." That just doesn't work. So we have to really address that issue as well.

I also want to talk about, historically, the opportunities for minority educators to be employed in districts. I think when we talk about these incentive programs, I also want to reemphasize this. It has to be in all of our communities. Because if you're a potential educator and you're thinking about going into the profession and you are a minority, if you know you are very limited in where you may be employed, that is going to affect your desire to go into that profession. So we have to make sure those

employment opportunities -- these incentive programs that you're doing, these pilots -- are offered in a lot of districts so that I know, as a minority educator, when I graduate I can work anywhere, there are opportunities for me to work everywhere, and I have better chances of getting a job -- that first job.

SENATOR RUIZ: And I think that's important. But the only thing is that, you know, we can't scale up right away--

MR. SPILLER: Fair enough.

SENATOR RUIZ: --and everywhere. And I think that one thing that we heard from a lot of people was the critical importance of having people of color teaching to students of color; and the greater investment that that has, also, on the impact of that student outcome and achievement.

So at one point--

MR. SPILLER: I 100 percent agree.

SENATOR RUIZ: But, you know, since we don't have the money to go all throughout-- But when you were talking before about affordability, we just had a little bit of a sidebar. It would be interesting to see if we continue expanding the college affordability program, would it make sense to, kind of, subject-focus it, right? So, like, tie paraprofessionals into the two-year, free tuition; and then really create a better systemic -- just--

MR. SPILLER: Yes, I think that's a great conversation to continue, because--

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MR. SPILLER: --as the Governor has been trying to drive that conversation, too -- yes, there could be-- When we talk about service -- right? -- and service to a community, I think we'd all agree education is one of those fields. Maybe there are different opportunities for those programs for those going into service than maybe others. So I think that's a great conversation that would absolutely need to be continued.

Lastly, just finishing up, I want to also note that we also work with Stockton University, a number of other partners, to offer programs where we specifically go in and target, again, at the younger grades, trying to get people interested in education, interested in becoming teachers. So we offer those as well, and we have seen success there.

And lastly, I'll just note that in addition to our Minority Leadership Recruitment Committee that we have, that we talked about before, we have a Civil Rights Committee, Women in Ed, Urban Ed -- these are all specific-focused Committees that we have within our organizations. A little bit to what my colleague just said -- when we do finally work hard and recruit someone into the profession, we have to have that mentoring and support system. And these are examples of where our educators of color can go into a lot of this work, make sure that their voices are heard throughout our organization, and make sure we're helping to recruit others to come after them.

So we're pretty happy about some of these pieces. I agree with you; we think all of this has to be expanded, and we're happy to see that there are so many dedicated to having an impact on this issue.

So I thank you for your time today.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much; and always on message.

MR. SPILLER: It's true, it's true. (laughter)

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

To close--

SENATOR KEAN: Madam Chair?

Oh, I'm so sorry; I'm so sorry, Senator.

SENATOR KEAN: I'm sorry.

Thank you, Madam Chairs.

Sean, I want to follow up on some of your questions; and I guess, also, on some of the things that were said over the course of the day.

And thank you for your testimony today.

MR. SPILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR KEAN: I think there are a lot of things we are looking at here, where it's systemic, it's structural -- things we need to look at. There are things we can do, over a period of time, in the two-year and the four-year institutions, as well as the graduate and beyond that; things we can do in pre-school, and in kindergarten, and the rest of the high school -- the school experience on the lower levels.

And I think we've gotten to a lot of common ground; I think we all want to get to the same endpoint, which is the best possible opportunity for everybody in every single zip code. And I think some of that's going to be some of the things we talked about today. It's also going to be trying to drill down into very specific school buildings where the management may not be working in partnerships. And I'd love to get some of your insights

where you say it could be a specific school building that may not be achieving what everybody wants, to get to the endpoint.

Can you give me some ideas on how you get into those areas?

MR. SPILLER: Thank you for the question. I think it's a great point, a great conversation.

I can tell you that working with the Department of Education, through looking at some of the numbers you heard about before -- and they've really built a coalition to kind of work on this issue -- I know-- In the early stages, so not beyond that yet -- but some of the early conversation has been around how do you identify some of those numbers to see where those needs are, those gaps, where they may be; in a way that doesn't feel threatening or punitive to that school, if you will, or even the district that it's part of. But then going in and saying, "Hey, what's going on here? How can we offer supports; or what is the gap that you're missing on -- why you're not able to recruit any educators of color," right?

So we're looking at ways to, kind of, do that now; and looking nationally for best practices to do that. And the good news is, the Department is working with a broad group to try and find that out.

I don't think anyone has that one answer -- and I would love to continue it with you as well -- but it's trying to identify that in a way that doesn't, then, scare districts to kind of, maybe, check a box or do something that stops people from looking; but allows us to get in there and say, "How do we identify your needs, and how do we help you, maybe, fill some of these spaces, these gaps?"

SENATOR KEAN: Because I think sometimes you see schools that are, literally, right down the street from each other--

MR. SPILLER: Yes.

SENATOR KEAN: --have very different metrics on whatever formula you're looking at. And I think we really have to look at getting to the -- drilling down and figuring out what's happening, specifically, in the building sometimes--

MR. SPILLER: Yes.

SENATOR KEAN: --and have that as part of the answer, not only for teacher -- putting into there; but also students who are coming -- going through that very specific building. Because you can't wait 12 years for a solution there, right? That's three generations of high school students going through there in 12 years. So you have to be aggressive and acute upfront.

MR. SPILLER: I tell you, I'm certainly appreciative of this body's desire to be aggressive in doing something. We all know there are goals; and the DOE has set some, and set some dates. But I think we all appreciate the urgency of trying to do things now, and continuing that work as we move along.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you.

MR. SPILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Senator Kean.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPILLER: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Last to close the program, I want to invite Ms. Tia Morris, from Teach For America, who I know has been championing this endeavor for a very long time.

**T I A M O R R I S:** Good afternoon.

I know I stand between you and lunch (laughter), and so I will be concise.

Thank you so much, Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Cunningham, and members of the Committee.

My name is Tia Morris, and I'm the Executive Director of Teach For America-New Jersey.

And while other organizations have been, really, aspiring to recruit teachers of color, we have been successfully doing it.

For those of you who don't know, Teach For America is an organization that's dedicated to finding outstanding, diverse leaders who are committed to educational equity and who are committed to expanding educational opportunity for students living in traditionally underserved communities.

Right now, in New Jersey, we have 500 teachers in classrooms across the state, working with 30,000 students. More than half of our teachers are from low-income backgrounds; more than half of our teachers are first generation college-goers; and a full 62 percent of our teachers are people of color.

And our program requires a two-year commitment. More than 80 percent of our teachers of color stay on beyond that two years.

And we reach these goals with, like, a coordinated focus on all aspects of the teacher pipeline. So that includes recruitment; it includes teacher training, certification, and retention. And retention, we include ongoing professional development, coaching; and really thinking about the working conditions, such as clustering teachers so that way teachers of color



aren't on an island and a space; such as focusing on what the type of culture is that's going to provide the environment for a teacher wanting to stay. So culturally competent management; the sort of wraparound supports for students and socio-emotional learning there.

And so given the progress that we've been able to make, I'd like to offer three recommendations.

First, we encourage the State to invest in and expand alternative teacher preparation programs and pathways to the classroom. Teach For America is one of these programs; and we have seen, by far, alternative pathway programs attract a more diverse pool of prospective educators. And this is, in part, because these pathways are much more affordable; and we can't overlook the financial challenges that pose real barriers, particularly for those from low-income backgrounds.

Second, we urge the State to encourage all educator prep programs, all districts, and alternate pathway programs to invest heavily in diversity recruitment. At Teach For America we take a layered approach to this. So, yes, similar to some of what we heard, we have a homegrown talent approach where we cultivate and recruit local talent. But we also take a broad perspective with this, looking nationwide. And so searching nationwide, focusing with institutions that focus on diversity -- so historically black colleges and universities, but also Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Asian American-Serving Institutions; and partnering, strategically, with student organizations that cultivate diverse leadership -- so the Posse Foundation, for example; or multicultural sororities and fraternities; and offices of campus-based offices of diversity.

Finally, we respectfully request that New Jersey consider increased flexibility to teacher candidates to be able to demonstrate basic skills and content knowledge. We've seen these requirements act as barriers for candidates who could, potentially, demonstrate it in other ways other than what currently is required in licensure.

So for example, 40 percent of our teaching core is in hard-to-staff areas. STEM is hard to staff; bilingual education, special education. A third of our teaching core is career changers. But every year we turn away teachers who want to teach in New Jersey, but who can't because they cannot get certified.

For example, I've seen so many ways -- I've been doing this work for 22 years -- so many ways that our system is broken. I recall an exceptional applicant to our program, with a neuroscience degree, who could not qualify to teach high school biology or high school chemistry here in Jersey.

We welcomed that teacher to our core, in 2014, who had 10 years of work experience; and it took her 7 times to pass the math Praxis and nearly \$1,000 in testing fees. Yet, her 4th graders demonstrated 90 percent proficiency at the end-of-the-year testing. And she, right now, is outperforming her peers in which she teaches middle school math.

And finally, this year, we have a new teacher -- a Latino male, Marco. He has a Ph.D. in chemical engineering; we specifically recruited him to teach chemistry. And yet, he had a nearly perfect score on the chemistry Praxis, but he wasn't considered by the State to have enough credits to teach chemistry. So he's not teaching high school chemistry now, because we could not get him certified to do so.

And so the perception and the assumption is that the hoops that we put in place to increase teacher quality and student outcomes is doing that; but there's just not enough evidence that this is true. We need high standards, but we need flexibility. We need flexibility to ensure that we are not turning away some of the candidates who could be effective in our classrooms.

And I see some of these specific recommendations -- as offering financial supports for test prep, preparation for Praxis support, flexibility in licensure, being able to utilize workforce experience, or looking at credit requirements, or having a range of passing on the Praxis exam, looking at whether or not grades in certain courses can help to demonstrate basic skills in that content areas.

Thinking about GPAs -- and someone, one of the Senators, did ask about GPAs -- but looking at GPAs and looking at the range there, particularly when we have graduates graduating with science degrees, or from rigorous colleges, and looking at whether that range is actually indicating performance in the classroom.

So, in closing, as you consider what recommendations to expand alternative pathways, to invest in diversity recruitment, to increase flexibility, I urge you to draw on the research that we all heard about -- the positive correlation between students of color who have teachers who reflect their backgrounds.

But as we become an increasingly global economy, we just have to understand that diverse teachers are good for all kids in New Jersey. And so I'm deeply committed to helping continue to push this in New Jersey -- push progress on this, and I am grateful for your time today.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

And just thank you for highlighting a chemical engineer who wants to spend time in the classroom; and that different pathway -- how we need to look at that, also, when we're attracting the person who is on their second career, trying to give back.

So we will be reaching out.

Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: That's the point I was going to make.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

That's one of the points I was going to bring.

Is there a state whose alternate-route approach you would recommend?

MS. MORRIS: Not offhand in total. But there are a number of states that have more flexible parameters; so for example, a menu of items that can demonstrate ability. So not just relying on all of these tests, but looking at -- it could be work experience, it could be a score on classes that you take in a university, it could be a number of items. And if we had a menu, we could ensure that it's equitable; that we're not lowering the standards, but that we're still allowing a demonstration.

SENATOR KEAN: Right.

MS. MORRIS: And so that's why flexibility is needed.

SENATOR KEAN: Right; but we don't want to harm any standards.

MS. MORRIS: Right.

SENATOR KEAN: So the goal is to figure out a way--

SENATOR RUIZ: Let's be very clear here; and I don't want anyone to walk away with this.

We heard from at least two individuals who, I think, far exceeded the quality and the standard of what we want in the classroom. That's not what the issue is here. We don't want to water down the substance; we want to find where the flaws are that are keeping a phenomenal teacher from being in the classroom.

MS. MORRIS: Absolutely.

SENATOR KEAN: We agree.

And the focus is, again-- So you say you're looking at this dashboard, this menu; is there another state that has that approach that you would be able to -- if not now, get, through the Chairs, get to the Committee?

MS. MORRIS: Absolutely; I would be happy to get that to the Chair.

SENATOR KEAN: Because if we're really trying to get whatever the barriers to entry; that whatever age, is to have the experience - - if they're meaningful examples, that we could get time to (indiscernible).

MS. MORRIS: Absolutely, Senator. I'd be happy to get to the Chair some examples of what other states utilize for their processes.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairs.

SENATOR RUIZ: I just want to thank everyone here.

I think we've covered a lot of ground in a little over two hours. There's a lot of work to be done.

I want to thank my Co-Chair for sharing her passion in this workspace as well.

I think that today there are several things that have been identified. Where we go to school, in our P through 12 system, matters for our career options in the long run as well.

So, Senator Cunningham.

SENATOR CUNNINGHAM: I just want to thank everyone for coming.

This has been a good discussion.

And to just remind everyone that this is the beginning; we do not anticipate coming up with something right away just to prove something together. We're committed to making sure that New Jersey has the best students possible, and every opportunity to excel if they choose to.

Have a good day.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**