

Testimony of  
**Michele Ridolfi O'Neill**  
**Connecticut Education Association**

Before the  
**State Board of Education**

August 11, 2020

Good morning Co-chairs Taylor and López, Commissioner Cardona, and esteemed members of the Board. My name is Michele Ridolfi O'Neill. I am a former teacher and currently serve as the Education Issues Specialist for the Connecticut Education Association.

I am here today to address the Board's consideration of expanding certification flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge State Board of Education members to balance flexibility with maintaining the professional status of educators and ensuring the high-quality teaching and student support services that accompany appropriate teacher certification.

Given the emergency pandemic situation the state of Connecticut is in, coupled with a recognized need to maintain high academic quality standards for students, CEA urges the State Board of Education to consider pursuing targeted flexibility in creating the proposed temporary "Emergency Generalist" (PK-8 & 7-12), and "Emergency Teacher of English Learners" (PK-12) authorizations, with critical parameters as follows:

1. The authorization will last for the current academic year only.
2. Those teachers who must stay home to care for children or who are at-risk and seeking accommodation to protect their health shall be allowed to remote teach into the classroom in their district; those granted emergency authorizations shall not supplant teachers who are available for remote-in teaching.
3. Authorizations shall be offered first to teachers within the district prior to supplanting any available teachers in said district.
4. Limits shall be placed on how far beyond the underlying certification area a teacher shall be permitted to teach (e.g. 2-3 grade levels).
5. The SBE shall consider placing a limit on the percentage of Full Time Equivalents in the district who can be granted such authorizations.

We thank State Board of Education members for their consideration.

Thank you,

Michele Ridolfi O'Neil