



## **AACTE-CT Statement to the State Board of Education Meeting on 4-7-21**

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the State Board of Education at your April 7<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

My name is Chris Drewry and I am the current Treasurer of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE-CT). I am also the Associate Dean, School of Education and Professional Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University. The AACTE-CT is an association of twelve public and private colleges and universities that provide Educator Preparation Programs to students interested in the education profession. We promote and strongly support high quality teaching and education in the state's schools and are advocates for robust educational leadership.

On behalf of the AACTE-CT, we want to say thanks to the Board of Education, the Department of Education, especially to those individuals with whom our group works with frequently.

As we all know, COVID continues to impact all of us and the AACTE-CT member institutions, collectively and individually, are continuing to do their best to ensure that Educator Preparation Programs are preparing their undergraduate and graduate students to become outstanding future teachers and educational leaders here in Connecticut.

We would also like to acknowledge that we share the financial concerns that were raised in the recent bill concerning the development of a new preservice performance assessment (SB 1035). While managing standard tuition and fees proves challenging for most students, our teacher candidates bear an additional burden based on the licensure assessments and testing measures required for obtaining an initial educator certificate. While these measures are in place to ensure that quality educators are emerging from our programs, they put an additional burden on these students. The costs associated with licensure include, but are not limited to:

- Basic skills assessments (Praxis Core, ACT, SAT)
- Culminating content assessments (Praxis II, Early Childhood, Foundations of Reading)
- State Certification Application Fees
- Background checks and fingerprinting fees
- edTPA portfolio submission

While these costs can average nearly \$1,000 per student at a minimum, these fees are not limited to one-time payments. Re-testing and re-submission can mean individual students are paying far more than those estimated minimum costs.

Progress has been made in alleviating costs, especially in the area of Fingerprinting and background check fees. With continued progress in mind, AACTE-CT would like to invite the Board of Education to collaborate on strategies for reducing these costs and to help support our teacher candidates who are most in need of financial assistance. The EPPs currently work to raise awareness among students of funding opportunities available through generous support at the local, state, and national levels. These include, but are not limited to:

- Praxis Re-Take Waiver codes
- edTPA submission vouchers
- State of Connecticut Minority Teacher Incentive Program scholarships
- TEACH grants
- Private scholarships and grants for teacher candidates
- Internships, Assistantships, and Residency positions

While these resources have been a tremendous asset for our students, we plan to continue to seek ways to eliminate the additional burden placed on teacher candidates and to make careers in education more accessible. Now, more than ever, we need to find ways to get skilled, passionate teacher candidates into our classrooms. We suggest a meeting between the AACTE-CT and Board of Education leadership to further discuss this issue.

As an organization, we want to continue working together with the Department of Education, the Board, and the various educational stakeholders such as the Connecticut Association of Public-School Superintendents, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, and other education organizations where appropriate. Please continue to feel free to reach out to our association on issues of mutual interest. Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Board.

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