Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board
Hartford, CT

To: Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board

From: Jennifer Rodriguez, CEPCB Chair

Date: August 28, 2026

Subject: Adoption Strengthening Connecticut's Educator Pipeline: Amendments to the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program Legislative Language (PA 26-149)

Strengthening Connecticut's Educator Pipeline: Amendments to the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program Legislative Language

Increasing candidate financial support, sustaining program resources, and maximizing state investment in educator preparation and certification

Introduction:

Consistent with the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board's statutory responsibility to advise on educator preparation and certification policy, this proposal is submitted for the Board's consideration and recommendation to the State Board of Education.

The Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board recommends consideration of targeted amendments to Section 10-156ii of the Connecticut General Statutes governing the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program. The proposed revisions are intended to strengthen Connecticut's investment in educator recruitment and preparation by increasing the annual scholarship award to $15,000, retaining scholarship repayment funds within the program, and establishing options for the use of unexpended appropriations after all scholarship obligations have been satisfied. See salient examples here.

Following its review of the proposal, the CEPCB removed the Connecticut public high school graduation requirement as redundant and unnecessarily restrictive. This change recognizes the diverse aspiring educators served by educator preparation programs, including alternative-route programs such as ARC and individuals who have recently moved to Connecticut.

The proposal retains the requirement that scholarship recipients become certified teachers employed by a Connecticut local or regional board of education or repay the scholarship, ensuring the state's investment supports Connecticut's educator workforce.

The Board also declined to limit scholarship funds to tuition and mandatory fees. Maintaining flexibility recognizes additional costs such as books and housing and allows educator preparation program offices to use funds in ways that best support eligible students.

These recommendations preserve the original legislative intent of supporting aspiring educators while improving the state's ability to maximize appropriated funds to address educator workforce needs. The proposal presents three policy options for the Board's consideration, each representing a different level of statutory flexibility while maintaining the scholarship program as the primary funding priority and ensuring that any remaining appropriated funds continue to support Connecticut's educator pipeline.

Rationale for Adopting this Proposal:

Connecticut has made a significant annual investment in the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program to strengthen the educator workforce and increase access to the teaching profession for candidates from underrepresented populations. While the program has provided valuable financial assistance to eligible candidates, annual appropriations have consistently exceeded program utilization, resulting in substantial unexpended balances that revert to the General Fund rather than continuing to support educator workforce development.

The Board's removal of the Connecticut public high school graduation requirement recognizes the diverse backgrounds of candidates entering Connecticut educator preparation programs, including individuals who recently moved to the state.

The proposal also recommends that scholarship repayment funds remain within the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program to create a sustainable source of future financial assistance for educator candidates.

The proposal retains the Connecticut employment requirement and repayment provision, ensuring that the state's investment remains connected to the Connecticut educator workforce.

The Board also determined that scholarship funds should not be limited to tuition and mandatory fees. Flexibility allows funds to address additional costs, such as books and housing, and enables educator preparation program offices to best support eligible students.

The option recommends that, after all scholarship obligations have been satisfied, any remaining appropriated funds continue to support Connecticut's educator pipeline through initiatives such as financial assistance for candidates completing required clinical experiences, educator residency opportunities, certification-related expenses, or other educator workforce development initiatives. By allowing appropriated funds to remain dedicated to educator recruitment, preparation, certification, and entry into the profession, the proposal seeks to maximize the state's investment while preserving the scholarship program as its primary purpose.

Alignment with Statutory Objectives (C.G.S. §10-150c(b))

Please indicate how this proposal aligns with the statutory objectives of the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board:

- ☑ **Builds streamlined, flexible pathways** in the educator profession grounded in a commitment to educator effectiveness by expanding financial support for teacher candidates and reducing financial barriers that may prevent qualified candidates from successfully completing educator preparation programs and entering the profession.

- ☐ **Enables educators to broaden their scope of practice** to meet the needs of more students
- ☑ **Ensures accountability of educator preparation programs** for both quality training experiences and candidate outcomes by strengthening financial supports during critical stages of preparation, including required clinical experiences, which contribute to candidate persistence, successful program completion, and readiness for effective teaching.
- ☐ **Supports continuous improvement of educator practice**, including systems that recognize and reward demonstrated mastery
- ☑ **Improves data transparency and equity**, including addressing disparities in educator distribution and vacancies by maintaining the scholarship program's focus on supporting candidates from underrepresented populations and maximizing the impact of legislative investments to expand opportunities for individuals entering the educator workforce.
- ☑ **Supports educators as professionals and lifelong learners**, including access to high-quality professional learning and mentorship by investing in candidates' successful completion of educator preparation, certification requirements, and entry into Connecticut's public schools, strengthening the foundation for continued professional growth and retention.

Conclusion:

The Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board is requested to review and consider these proposed amendments to Section 10-156ii of the Connecticut General Statutes and determine whether to recommend their advancement to the State Board of Education for legislative consideration.

The amendments reflect the Board's decision to remove an unnecessarily restrictive high school graduation requirement while retaining the Connecticut employment and repayment requirement.

The proposal also preserves flexibility in the use of scholarship funds to address costs beyond tuition and fees, allowing educator preparation program offices to best support eligible students.

The proposed amendments preserve the original purpose of the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program while enhancing its effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term contribution to Connecticut's educator workforce. By ensuring that appropriated and repaid funds remain dedicated to educator recruitment and preparation, the proposal seeks to maximize the state's investment in developing and retaining highly qualified educators for Connecticut's schools.

Prepared by: Jennifer Rodriguez, CEPCB Chair

Attachment(s):

Section 10-156ii of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2027):

(a) There is established an aspiring educators scholarship program administered by the Department of Education. The program shall provide an annual scholarship to aspiring educators who

[(1) graduated from a public high school in this state, and

(2)] are enrolled in a teacher preparation program at any four-year institution of higher education.

An aspiring educator may receive an annual scholarship in an amount up to [ten] fifteen thousand dollars for each year such aspiring educator is enrolled and in good standing in a teacher preparation program. As used in this section, "aspiring educator" means an individual who is in a population subgroup that is underrepresented in the teaching profession in this state and for which such population subgroup has been identified as a teacher shortage area by the Commissioner of Education pursuant to section 10-8b, as amended by this act.

(b) The Department of Education may award an annual scholarship to individuals who is enrolled and in good standing in an educator preparation program at any four-year institution of higher education that leads to certification in any of the certification endorsement shortage areas identified by the Commissioner of Education. An eligible individual may receive an annual scholarship in an amount not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars for each year such individual is enrolled in such educator preparation program.

(c) An applicant may apply for a scholarship under both subsection (a) and subsection (b) of this section, provided the total amount of scholarship funds awarded to such applicant under this section for any one year shall not exceed fifteen thousand dollars.

[(b)] (d) Not later than January 1, 2027, the department shall, in consultation with the chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, develop a policy concerning the administration of the scholarship. Such policy shall include, but need not be limited to, provisions regarding

(1) any additional eligibility criteria,

(2) payment and distribution of the scholarships to aspiring educators through the teacher preparation programs in which they are enrolled, and

(3) the notification of students in high school of the scholarship program, including the opportunity to apply for a scholarship under the program while enrolled in high school and prior to graduation if such student will be enrolled in a teacher preparation program during the following fall semester at a four-year institution of higher education,

(4) procedures governing the use of any unexpended funds pursuant to subsection (g).

[(c)] (e) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the department shall annually award scholarships in accordance with the provisions of this section and the guidelines developed pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

[(d)] (f) The Commissioner of Education shall develop scholarship repayment criteria for recipients who are not employed as a certified teacher by a local or regional board of education in this state following graduation from a teacher preparation program. Any amounts repaid to the department shall be [deposited in the General Fund] credited to the appropriation for the Aspiring Educators Scholarship Program and shall be used for the purposes of this section.

[(e) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, the commissioner shall determine if there are any unexpended funds appropriated for purposes of this section for the fiscal year. If the commissioner determines that there are unexpended funds in said fiscal year, the commissioner shall transfer, not later than July 15, 2026, through a memorandum of understanding with the Comptroller, up to three hundred thousand dollars of such unexpended funds for the purpose of expanding the subsidy program, established pursuant to section 203 of public act 23- 204, as amended by section 124 of public act 24-81 and this act, to include paraeducators who are employed by a charter school in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027.]

(g) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2027, and each fiscal year thereafter, the commissioner shall determine whether there are any unexpended funds appropriated for the purposes of this section. If they determine that unexpended funds remain after all scholarship obligations under this section have been satisfied, not later than February first of such fiscal year, they may retain and expend such funds for initiatives that advance educator recruitment, preparation, completion, certification, entry, and retention into the teaching profession in this state, including financial assistance for candidates completing the required clinical experience, including the student teaching semester of an approved educator preparation program. The commissioner in consultation with the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board shall establish guidelines in consultation governing the use of such funds.

[(f)] (h) The department may accept gifts, grants and donations, from any source, public or private, for the aspiring educators scholarship program.

[(g)] (i) Not later than January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the department shall develop a report that includes annual data on the population subgroups of students who receive a scholarship under the program and the teacher preparation program in which they are enrolled. The department shall submit such report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a.