

Remarks of Elizabeth Legere  
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education  
Concerning the proposed changes to certification in Special Education

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Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Legere and I'm a Special Education Teacher for the Education Association of Canton.

I am writing with concerns regarding the proposed changes to certification in Special Education. Special Education is a challenging field that requires expertise in many areas including assessment (administering, interpreting and diagnosing both standardized and non-standardized tests), content area instruction (both in and out of the classroom), standards for instruction, remediation, how to make modifications and appropriate accommodations to school work, how to handle behavioral issues, the law as it applies to both regular and special education, how to work with low-incidence/high needs disabilities, the very foundations of reading and mathematics, how to analyze student work, how to instruct and manage paraprofessionals, and how to run PPT meetings. To be a truly effective Special Education teacher, one needs all of these skills. A 30-credit graduate degree program will not be sufficient.

To be effective, a teacher-in-training needs to get into the field to experience it. Through a graduate degree program that does not require student teaching, these prospective professionals are being set up for failure. When they finally would get to

work with these students with special needs, they will have minimal textbook knowledge and no real world skills.

Professionals will be less likely to pursue such a challenging career, knowing that they will be ill-prepared, would not have the option to specialize (unless they want to spend even more money to pursue even higher degrees), and have to obtain an undergraduate degree that they have no interest in and will probably never use before they can finally pursue the degree that they would prefer. Not only are these going to be road blocks to potential Special Education teachers, but the cost factor of requiring an additional 75 hours of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to earn the professional certificate will certainly turn people away from this very important field. These would be required by the State of Connecticut, but no cost estimate was given. In perusing some of the workshops that I have attended, many cost hundreds of dollars for between 3 and 5 CEU hours. This additional cost could be more than \$3,000 for a potential educator. This additional cost would definitely turn me away from the field. If the State of Connecticut understands that a graduate level course would not meet the needs of potential Special Educators (by requiring this amount of CEUs), which clearly it appears to, then the present training of Special Educators should remain as it is.

In the present economy, it is also important to consider the costs involved with a proposal of this type. Districts will have to pay more for Special Educators, as they can only hire professionals with a Master's Degree or higher (if they are specialists in

an area). If districts want to keep their Special Educators, they may end up incurring the costs associated with those additional CEUs that will be required, as well.

I fear for our educational system if this plan is put into place. Individuals will no longer pursue Special Education certification, school districts will incur even more costs, which will impact many jobs, and the Special Educators that come out of the proposed plan will not be prepared to meet the needs of their students.