



Dannel P. Malloy

GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

June 30, 2015

The Honorable Denise W. Merrill
Secretary of State
30 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Madam Secretary:

I hereby return, without my signature, House Bill 6977, *An Act Establishing Qualifications for the Commissioner of Education*. This bill establishes qualifications for an individual appointed to serve as the Commissioner of the Department of Education.

House Bill 6977 encroaches on the purview of the chief executive of the state to select a candidate whom s/he deems the best candidate to lead the department and implement the Governor's education policy initiatives. The Commissioner of Education's position is already unique in its appointment process. The Education Commissioner is the only commissioner that is subject to the recommendation of a state board. The state board of education historically has completed a thorough and deliberative process that includes a public job announcement tailored to the state department's need at the time.

Furthermore, it is important to note that in accordance with sections 4-5 through 4-7 of the general statutes, each commissioner appointed by a governor is subject to a rigorous legislative vetting process that includes hearings and a vote before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee and approval by the General Assembly. The Legislature has the right to reject any candidate nominated by the Governor that they do not feel possesses the appropriate qualifications and experience to lead a department for the State of Connecticut.

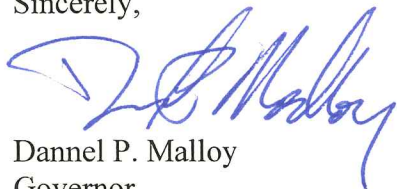
In the course of the debate on this legislation, it has been stated that many states require qualifications for the Commissioner of Education. To be clear, the overwhelming majority of these states have minimum requirements regarding residency and age for commissioner and nothing more. Only three states are as prescriptive as this bill, and none of those states are considered Connecticut's peers on public education.

Open-mindedness and flexibility are paramount in a search for the right candidate who can best respond to the educational challenges that face our state. The establishment of qualifications for the Commissioner of Education in statute closes the door on a broad pool of talented and diverse leaders who would otherwise be eligible and could foster greatness in our schools. I am concerned that specific qualifications for Commissioner will unintentionally reduce the diversity of future commissioner applicant pools. Representation of African American and Hispanic teachers and administrators remains disproportionately low, especially when compared to Connecticut's student population. Women make up nearly 75% of teachers in Connecticut, but they make up only 58.5% of administrators. Their representation drops further among Superintendents. Our current commissioner is only the second woman to serve as Commissioner in the history of the State Department of Education, and she herself had not previously served as a Superintendent.

It should be our mission to encourage creative education leaders regardless of background to consider tackling the challenge of closing the achievement gap and leading our students and teachers to even greater heights.

For these reasons, I disapprove of House Bill 6977, *An Act Establishing Qualifications for the Commissioner of Education*. Pursuant to Section 15 of Article Fourth of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut, I am returning House Bill 6977 without my signature.

Sincerely,



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor