Issue Brief

Diversity in the Workforce

Addressing Teacher Shortages and Improving Diversity

Related bills to this topic

Strength in Diversity Act of 2020

- H.R.2639 & S.1418: This bill directs the Department of Education (ED) to award grants to specified educational agencies (e.g., local educational agencies) to develop or implement plans to improve diversity and reduce or eliminate racial or socioeconomic isolation in publicly funded early childhood education programs, public elementary schools, or public secondary schools.
    - Passed in the House 9/15/2020
    - Read in the Senate and referred to Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on 9/16/2020

Why Support Topic?

- State level
    - 2019-2020 critical teacher shortages reported in Florida
    - This included special education teachers[3]
- Federal level
    - 18% of special education teachers and 10% special education professors are people of color
    - More than half of students with disabilities are from minority backgrounds[1]
- Some programs, such as a school district in GA recruit residents to build a workforce that reflects the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the student population[2]

Definitions

- Critical Shortage Area: Certification areas where substantial proportions of teachers who are not certified in the appropriate field are being hired to teach such courses, where significant vacancies exist, and where postsecondary institutions do not produce enough graduates to meet the needs of Florida's K-12 student population. Section 1012.07, F.S., requires the State Board of Education to annually identify critical teacher shortages[3]

Sources:

1. Council for Exceptional Children Issue Brief 2020: Shortages of Special Education Teachers and Early Intervention Providers
2. Edweek, 2019, Wanted: Teachers as Diverse as Their Students
3. Florida DOE Identification of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas

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