

**TESTIMONY OF ALBERT SHANKER**  
**President, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO**  
**Before the Committee on Education & Labor**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Regarding HR 4130, Teacher Training and Recruitment**  
**March 15, 1990**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: I am Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers. Our union, with more than 725,000 members nation-wide, has a great interest in HR 4130, a bill which would reestablish a federal role in the area of teacher training and recruitment. HR 4130 is a timely bill because of the scope of the impending teacher shortage. By offering HR 4130 for consideration by this Congress you are obviously aware of the need to do something to attract additional qualified people to the teaching profession.

Due to the extent of the teacher shortage, it must be said that, while federal action is needed and welcomed by the AFT, neither enactment of HR 4130 nor an unexpected decision by large numbers of college graduates to enter the teaching force is likely to produce enough qualified teachers to operate schools the way we do today. This shortage of qualified teachers is an immediate problem that must be addressed, but nevertheless may present us with an opportunity to change the way schools now operate. Given the overall achievement level of our existing school system, as measured by the best indicators available of school performance, the impending teacher shortage should force us to rethink what our schools should do and what our goals for the future should be.

In the 1990's a shortage of qualified college graduates will force changes throughout society as well as in the way we staff schools at all levels. Current demographic projections tell us that by the mid 1990's about 1.3 million teachers, or about one-half of the current teaching force, will leave the profession. To replace those expected to leave teaching, we would need to attract 23% of each college graduating class into teaching for each of the next several years. If we want to attract our new teachers from the top half of the graduating class, it would take 46% of that group. In 1982, 4.7% of all college students indicated they

were heading for a teaching career, in 1985, 6% and in 1988's, 8.8%. These figures show modest improvement in teacher recruitment during a decade when education needs received tremendous publicity. However, even if other sources of teacher recruitment are fully developed, such as alternative certification and former teachers returning to classrooms, and if the schools do somewhat better at attracting qualified college graduates than in the past, the current structure of education -- with one teacher in every classroom talking to 25 or more students -- can only be maintained by adopting lower entry standards for teaching. Something must be done to change that unhappy state of affairs.

If we try to maintain the existing system by lowering even today's minimal entry standards we will do an injustice to the students and our nation. Educational performance must improve and only better qualified teachers working in a more efficient way can accomplish that goal. The future structure of our schools must change, not only to accommodate a downsized teaching profession, but to educate young people for life in a rapidly changing economy and society.

The AFT supports HR 4130 with reservations. We think it is a bill which could help to improve teacher training and recruitment if some changes are made in its structure. By and large, you have chosen the areas of greatest need on which to concentrate resources. Inservice training, sabbaticals, minority recruitment, and bilingual education are all areas that would benefit from increased federal support. Tuition subsidies for students in 4-year colleges, and for students enrolled in community colleges that have articulation agreements with 4-year institutions, should generate new interest in teaching by individuals who are not now considering the profession.

In addition, however, the AFT believes there is a need to emphasize the potential for new teacher recruits among individuals currently employed by school districts.

One major goal of of the AFT and of this committee is to increase the number of minorities entering teaching and to increase the retention rate of minorities in the teaching force. The AFT believes that a major source of minority teachers exists among paraprofessionals and other current school employees. AFT has extensive experience in the creation of career ladders that have raised thousands of teachers out of the ranks of paraprofessionals. Any legislation designed to help recruit new teachers should allow funding of teacher education for individuals who already work in the schools. It is our experience that teachers who come out of the school employee ranks start with an edge in experience and have a significantly higher retention rate than those who are new school employees. For example, in Baltimore more than 200 paraprofessionals have become teachers. Their attrition rate is less than 5%. The normal teacher attrition in that city is 10%. In New York City, over the past five years 5000 paraprofessionals have become teachers and they have less than a 1% attrition rate. The general attrition rate for New York City was 16.2% in 1986-87. Developing new teachers from the ranks of classified school employees can pay big dividends to our school system.

Another feature of HR 4130 that the AFT believes needs to be changed is Title II - Financial Assistance for Institutional Recruitment and Retention. This title puts federal money into traditional teacher training institutions with the hope that they will produce larger numbers of needed, qualified teachers. We believe that all aid in this bill should be result oriented. Accordingly we ask the committee to add a provision to Title II that tracks the results of institutional support. We should know how many additional teachers this approach produces and how these teachers fare when taking the entry level teacher competency test that

many states now require. We ask that the purpose section of Title II be modified to include the word "qualified" before students and that merely preparing to enter the teaching profession is not an adequate goal. This title should have as its purpose the preparation of teachers who can pass licensing exams and improve the pool of candidates seeking to enter the teaching profession.

The AFT believes that the funds in this bill should be targeted on individuals rather than higher education institutions. AFT urges that the authorization ceilings between Titles I and II be reversed.

You are aware, I am sure, that there is currently a move afoot to "restructure" education -- to bring the management of teaching and learning to the school level so that teachers have the freedom to accommodate teaching practices to the many different ways that students learn. Its spokesmen, myself included, argue that our traditional factory model for school organization creates an environment that is actually unfriendly to student learning. Today's schools, as yesterday's, ignore most of what learning theory tells us about how students learn. The regimented, lock-step character of today's schools limit teacher imagination and style, thus restricting teaching practice to a few set patterns. Accordingly we are concerned about Sections 305 (A) (1) and (2). I wonder what research findings are referenced in these sections?

AFT does not support locking professional development into a mold based upon any one model. Many approaches are needed and experimentation should to be encouraged. I doubt that we would ever say any one approach is best for all teachers. Promising research should be made available to schools and teachers as an aid to professional improvement, not as a straight jacket that all must fit.

This bill acknowledges the need to encourage restructuring: Title III -- Professional Development Academies -- encourages school based management and shared decision making. Unfortunately school restructuring becomes merely one of many goals of this title.

I would like to make three specific suggestions:

1. Redefine the eligibility requirements for individual teachers, as well as the requirements in state plans, so that the sabbatical activities of scholarship recipients will be primarily directed at school-wide change.
2. Redefine the purpose of "professional development academies" to be the preparation of both new and experienced staff to restructure schools through shared decision-making.
3. Make school restructuring the highest priority activity for Title III activities rather than number 5 on a long list of possible activities.

AFT believes that HR 4130 relies too heavily on current arrangements and does little to create possibilities for new and more promising developments in teacher training and recruitment. By leveraging most of the bill's activities through institutions of higher education, rather than allowing school districts to develop plans that best meet their needs, HR 4130 locks professional development into a mold that may or may not meet the challenges of the 1990's. New programs in HR 3140 should aim at tapping the initiative and creativity of teachers and others in designing inservice programs.

I believe that these kinds of changes would make HR 4130 a truly significant initiative. The strategy outlined in HR 4130 could and should make a federal statement about the need to create totally different schools from the ones we have known.

There is currently widespread recognition among the best education leaders that new dollars will be predicated on better results. I believe that the short-term start up funds this bill could make available for school change would save us money down the road as schools begin to change the ways they allocate resources and the ways teachers teach. More importantly, the new federal investment represented by HR 4130 must enable our schools to educate a literate, thinking, functional and democratic citizenry. The bottom line should be a better school system for all our children.

The effort to get the federal government back in the business of supporting teacher education and recruitment is strongly supported by the AFT. Your emphasis on professional development is well taken, and we believe that focusing in-service training on activities that can have major impact, such as school restructuring, will pay dividends if more is done to involve teachers and local school districts in the development of programs.

This legislation is an important priority for the AFT. I thank Chairman Hawkins for his hard work and interest in this important endeavor. Tightening of the focus and placing emphasis on the issues that will make or break public education in the 1990's will make HR 4130 an even better bill. The teacher shortage about to hit education presents us with an opportunity to rethink the role and structure of our schools and to create a more humane and effective school system.