



April 19, 2017

Dear Senator Pratt:

The Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) representing 223 Greater Minnesota school districts daily educating approximately 237,000 students, goes on record supporting SF 4 in its conceptual framework and many of its specific provisions.

MREA member districts have reported a severely shrinking pool of teacher applicants and increasing difficulty in finding qualified teachers for the past five years. These teacher shortages have been documented in the 2015 and 2017 Minnesota Supply and Demand Reports.

The Legislative Study Group on Educator Licensing invested considerable time studying this issue and the Legislative Auditor issued a thorough report. SF 4 incorporates many of the recommendations of both studies and reports. We wish to commend you and the Education Policy Committee for the work and thought demonstrated in SF 4.

MREA specifically supports SF 4 for the following features:

- Establishing a Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board.
- Consolidating all licensing functions under the direction of the Board.
- Simplifying the licensing structure and language of licensing into four Tiers.
- Defining clear pathways to move up Tiers both within traditional collegiate teacher preparation institutions and with alternative portfolio and credentialing processes.
- Reducing barriers to entry into the teaching profession by
  - Opening Tiers 1 and 2 to teachers with multiple types of backgrounds, and
  - Providing an alternative for Tier 3 and 4 teachers to demonstrate the required skills of teaching in the classroom, or via portfolio, in lieu of a passing score on basic skills tests.

As SF 4 proceeds through the Conference Committee, MREA recommends the following improvements in the resulting conference report:

- In Article 1, Section 8 where the Board is required to adopt rules; it's been MREA's position that the Board must have a dual mission. That dual mission is quality and supply. The Board should be directed to analyze the impact of proposed rules on the supply of teachers as well as quality.
- Tiers 3 and 4 need attention and work as these are the Tiers MREA wants the vast majority of our teachers to attain. Among the areas that need to be addressed are the following:
  - Simply passing written tests to gain entry to Tier 3 and three years of successful teaching for Tier 4 are insufficient to ensure that professional

educators demonstrate understanding of the purposes of public education, their role in the growth and development of youth, and the collaborative culture of teaching.

- CTE teachers need pathways to Tier 3 and 4 that are more comprehensive than passing tests, but do not require a four-year BS degree.
  - Addressing these concerns and to assure multiple pathways to Tier 3 and 4 will require a thorough review of the Standards for Effective Practice for Teachers 8710.2000 to simplify and streamline the requirements for teacher preparation whether through course work or portfolio. This perhaps can be done with a stakeholder group to report the new Board and the Legislature
- The timelines and financial resources allocated to this new Board need to be sufficient so that transition and initial work of the Board will be effective and seamless for teacher candidates and teacher preparation programs.

Given the workload of this board, we recommend an initial stipend to encourage quality applicants to the board and some compensation for the tasks involved in launching this new Board and Tiered license system.

MREA both supports the framework of SF 4 and provides these recommendations to improve both the new Tiered license system and the transition from the current to the proposed system.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Fred Nolan  
MREA Executive Director



Voice for Greater Minnesota Education

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