

October 17, 2016

Chair Wiger, Chair Erickson and members of the Teacher Licensure Study Group:

We appreciate your commitment to developing solutions to improve Minnesota's teacher-licensure system, which, according to a 2016 Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) report, is "broken and needs significant changes."

After presenting its licensure proposals, the study group called on stakeholders to submit proposals that would restructure the state's teacher-licensure system. In response, we have convened a coalition of advocates. We propose consolidating all licensure activity under the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), with the exception of teacher discipline and misconduct matters, which would be the responsibility of a professional educator board.

Licensing agency with professional educator board

We agree with the OLA that consolidating teacher-licensure responsibilities in one state entity would improve transparency, reduce confusion among applicants and school administrators, and provide increased accountability for teacher-licensure decisions. We recommend that the Legislature consolidate all licensure activities into the MDE and establish a separate, independent professional standards and ethics board. The entities should be designed in the following ways:

MDE Educator Licensing Division

- Licensing Director given semi-autonomous authority with reporting requirements to the Legislature
- Licensing Division given full authority to make licensing determination consistent with statute and rule
- Licensing Division to review and approve educator preparation programs consistent with statute and rule
- MDE Commissioner given limited rule-making authority related to licensure and preparation program requirements
- Establish a clear appeals process including an internal appeal of licensing decision to the commissioner, followed—if necessary—by the Administrative Law Judge

Independent Standards and Ethics Professional Board

- Authorized to review and remedy professional misconduct and discipline matters, including the right to recommend license revocation or suspension
- 9 members appointed by the Governor; Senate Confirmed; term limited
 - six teachers, currently teaching or teaching at time of appointment
 - three public members, one of whom must be a parent or guardian of a school-aged child.

We stand ready to support this legislative study group in making the changes recommended to fix our broken teacher-licensure system.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sellers, Ed Allies
Jim Bartholomew, Minnesota Business
Partnership
Rick Champion, Prodeo Academy
Joe Nathan, Center for School Change

Matt Kramer, Wildflower Montessori
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