

October 25, 2016

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

We have appreciated the opportunity to engage with you all to create a clear, consistent educator licensure system and governance model. As we've continued to listen and meet with Study Group members and other stakeholder groups, we continue to stand by our priorities, many of which were outlined in the Office of the Legislative Auditor's Report, we presented to you at the August Study Group Meeting:

1. Consolidate all teacher-licensure activities into one state entity.
 - a. This will ensure clear lines of communication to candidates, increase administrative effectiveness, and enable stronger Legislative oversight. We also believe this governing body should be diverse in makeup, perspective, and background to ensure all voices are represented in the decision-making process.
2. Restructure our licensure system into tiers with clear points of entry and progression for both in and out-of-state candidates.
 - a. We also believe a teacher's progression through tiers should be based on successful teaching experience and such professional accomplishments as attaining National Board Certification. This consistency and transparency is especially important for out-of-state applicants, as some of these experienced educators have endured significant and unnecessary difficulty under the current system in becoming teachers in Minnesota after having been successful, licensed teachers in other states.
3. Create an equivalent license for our first and second-year teachers.
 - a. Any new tiered licensure system should ensure that new teachers who have met the rigorous admissions requirements to participate in a high-quality, state-approved alternative teacher preparation program under Minnesota Statutes 122A.245 —completing no less than 200 pre-service preparation hours and receiving intensive on-going classroom-based support for two years—can continue to have a pathway to teaching. Related, it is essential that local school leaders can continue to be able to consider freely these new teachers for hire alongside those who have completed traditional pre-service-only preparation programs, without state-imposed restriction.
4. Ensure clear lines of communication between applicants and the new licensing body
 - a. Especially if an applicant is denied a license, the licensing body should specifically state the deficiencies it identified in the applicant's preparation or qualifications. No applicant should be directed to a College or University's Teacher Preparation Program to identify these deficiencies or missing coursework, as these institutions have a vested financial interest in the applicant enrolling in their program.
5. Implement a clear, consistent licensure-appeal process
 - a. And that the licensing body provides accurate and thorough information on how to appeal a licensure decision to every applicant who does not receive a full license.

We hope that as the Study Group continues to discuss the multiple proposals on governance and tiered licensure systems shared, it will keep these priorities in mind to best serve both in-state residency candidates, and out-of-state teachers who want to serve kids in Minnesota.