

Representative Sykora, my name is Linda Distad and I am the president of the Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE). MACTE represents all 29 Minnesota teacher preparation institutions. I am here to talk about the implications of proposed House File #1814.

MACTE has four concerns about this bill:

1. Currently all candidates for initial licensure meet the same high consistent standards as established by the Minnesota Board of Teaching. We refer to these as the Standards of Effective Practice. Please keep in mind the rich and growing complexity of classrooms in Minnesota. Meeting the learning needs of a highly diverse student population cannot be accomplished without a deep understanding of subject matter in addition to knowledge of learning theory, educational methodologies and technologies, and developmental psychology. This bill would circumvent the standards, resulting in a two-track system for licensure.
2. If the goal of the bill is to open pathways to alternative licensure as a way to increase the number of teachers in the high demand areas of mathematics, science and special education then higher education is prepared to work with the Board of Teaching to create more flexible processes. I want to point out that currently most institutions offer some form of “alternative pathway” such as weekend and evening formats, summer-based, online, and off-site programs in addition to portfolio reviews to assess prior experience.
3. The Assessment Center that was designed by a working group of the Board of Teaching in collaboration with numerous educational constituents was proposed as a vehicle for assessing the preparedness of candidates who were following an alternative path to licensure. To my knowledge, the Assessment Center is ready for implementation provided the funds for hiring a staff person are released.
4. The Minnesota Board of Teaching is doing an excellent job. They have remained steadfast in their adherence to high standards for teachers teaching in Minnesota classrooms. However, they also recognize the difficulty of providing a capable teacher in areas where demands exceed availability. To deal with these situations, the Board has the authority to grant temporary limited licenses or non-licensed community expert designations. MACTE institutions are prepared to work with these individuals to carry out the recommendations of the Assessment Center.

In summary, MACTE fully supports alternative routes to licensure when the teachers meet all of the qualifications of the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice, thus avoiding a two-track system. MACTE supports the Assessment Center as designed by the Board of Teaching. MACTE believes that licensure is the purview of the Board of Teaching and should remain so.

However, if this bill goes forward, MACTE would support it as amended by Representative Greiling.

The decisions you make about who will be given the responsibility for teaching Minnesota students affects all of us. Yours is an awesome responsibility, with implications that go far into the future.

Thank you.