

## **MACTE Weekly Legislative Report, 2.09.15**

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### **MACTE Testifies on SF 298**

On Thursday, February 5, both Kitty Foord and I had an opportunity to testify, as well as to answer follow-up questions, on Senator Stumpf's bill, SF 298. This bill would allow those teaching on limited licenses to get an initial license without having passed the basic skills test based on a college transcript review and a letter from their supervisor. We followed a number of testifiers, mostly from school districts, expressing their support for the bill. All were passionate about the need to assist high quality candidates achieve licensure without having passed the MTLE basic skills test, and several teachers or teacher candidates brought tears to many eyes as they described how the test was jeopardizing their ability to realize their teaching dreams. Our position was to express support for the intent behind this bill to "fix" current problems with the basic skills test but to suggest that what is needed is a change in statute to meet the needs of ALL teacher candidates, not just those currently teaching on limited licenses. We tried to help senators understand, for example, that some candidates who have not passed the test aren't even given the chance to begin teaching and to point out problems with the test itself and its inflated definition of "basic" skills. There was clearly some support for our position, but it remains to be seen whether legislators will be convinced to truly fix the problem or apply what we see as essentially a band-aid for candidates that are hired without having passed the MTLE basic skills tests.

### **Next Up, HF 2**

On Tuesday, February 10, MACTE will again be heard in testimony about HF 2. There are many provisions in this bill that are inconsistent with our positions on teacher preparation and licensure and I will highlight those for committee members. In particular, I will focus on our belief that all candidates for licensure, regardless of where or how they have been prepared, should be held to the same high standards and address some key issues relative to teacher shortages. Data from the BOT and MDE will be helpful in countering claims that the path to licensure for candidates prepared outside Minnesota is keeping qualified candidates out of the classroom (in 2013-2014, for example, Minnesota licenses were issued to 3,658 candidates from out-of-state, representing 39% of the total licenses issued, and all but 1% of out-of-state candidates were given full licensure). Since we have not yet had a chance to be heard in this committee, it will be good to share our issues and concerns with committee members.

### **List of Bills Being Tracked Grows**

As has been the case for a number of years, the list of bills addressing teacher preparation and licensure is growing long. Additions since last week's report include House Files 394, 589, 642, 645, and 681. As always, I will appreciate comments and suggestions on the bills being tracked.