

MACTE Weekly Legislative Update, 2.27.15

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Another Busy Week

Bill introductions and hearings are continuing at a steady pace at the Capitol. The key bill of interest to MACTE this week was HF 244, authored by Rep. Dean Urdahl and focused on requiring annual reporting of teacher and administrator preparation programs to the BOT, BOSA, and the Office of Higher Education. Kitty Foord and I testified on Tuesday evening, 2.24, expressing our concerns about costs, duplications, and purposes of collecting and reporting all the data outlined in the bill and the need to consider possible misuses of the data. Kitty developed and distributed a detailed document outlining for legislators and staff all of the data currently reported for Title II, IPEDS, and EPASS. It seemed clear that they were unaware of just how much time and energy is already spent reporting data and, although the bill passed, the author and others made it clear that they expected changes to be made (or at least considered) before the bill is heard at its next stop, the House Education Finance Committee. We expect discussions about the bill early next week.

Bill Providing Tax Credit for Content Area Masters Bill Advances

Another Urdahl bill, HF 245, is moving along in the house. It would provide for up to \$2,500 in tax credits for teachers who earn a Master's Degree in the content area in which they teach or, for elementary teachers, in a "core content area in which the teacher provides direct classroom instruction." Although we had suggested two additional options, credit for a Master's in Teaching and for work leading to National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification, neither of those options was added to the bill. A similar bill tied to shortage areas is expected to be heard in the Senate Education Committee next week.

Possible Fiscal Costs Stops HF 2 (For Now)

HF 2, the bill which contains an array of changes in teacher licensure as well as the so-called LIFO provisions, seemed on a fast track to House approval until the Governor released information about the extent of projected costs of its implementation. The cost issue was one that had been raised repeatedly by DFL members in the Policy Committee, then the Finance Committee, and finally in Ways and Means, but it was essentially dismissed by committee leaders who seemed intent on getting it passed off the floor in February. It seems ironic that the very leaders whose responsibility I believe it is to request fiscal notes are now criticizing the administration for failing to provide them previously. In any case, you can be sure that significant discussion is taking place about the projected costs and how to handle them when the bill is brought up on the floor of the House, presumably next week.