

MACTE Weekly Legislative Update, 4.19.15

Prepared by Cyndy Crist, MACTE Legislative and Policy Liaison

Wild and Crazy Week Ends with Omnibus Bills Finished. As often happens at this time of the year, it was a week full of committee hearings filled with long lists of testifiers, a wide array of amendments, and finally completion of all education omnibus bills. There were few surprises but there were some last minute developments that will require our careful attention and possible action in the remaining weeks of the session. Here are the major bills and highlights of some provisions of each:

HF 844 is the House Education Finance Omnibus Bill. It incorporates all of the provisions contained in the House Education Innovation Policy Bill, HF 1591, along with a wide array of funding items. As such, it includes many provisions we oppose including several that would ease (some would say significantly lower) standards used to award licensure to those prepared in other states as well as those seeking to teach as non-licensed community experts. The only funding provisions related to teacher licensure involves a set of changes regarding funding for the Board of Teaching. HF 844 is scheduled to be heard on Monday in the House Taxes Committee.

HF 845 is the House Higher Education Omnibus Bill. It includes two provisions of specific interest to MACTE members. One is the year-long student teaching provision, which was modified to specify that teacher preparation institutions may (rather than must) offer year-long programs, along with a FY2016 appropriation of \$100,000 to MnSCU to fund up to two pilot projects. The other is creation of a teacher shortage loan forgiveness program with an appropriation of \$590,000 in 2016 and \$565,000 in 2017. HF 845 is scheduled to be heard in the Ways and Means Committee on Monday, April 20.

SF 811 is the E-12 Finance Omnibus Bill. It does not include the policy omnibus bill, SF 1495, and as such has few provisions that involve teacher preparation. Two notable exceptions are the inclusion as an author's amendment of CAPS (Certificates of Advanced Professional Study) that would be available to already licensed individuals wishing to teach when a licensure program in the discipline does not exist or when a teacher with a full license in the discipline cannot be found. The other provision amended into the bill, a variation of HF 244/SF 664, would require teacher preparation programs to collect and report summary data on their websites on four-year graduation rates, licensure rates, employment rates, and candidate satisfaction. We are working with the author, Senator Patricia Torres-Ray, to change the first two measures to six-year graduation rates for BA/BS programs and completion rates, and we remain hopeful that changes will be made before the bill is final. SF 811 is expected to be heard in Senate Finance on Wednesday.

SF 5 is the Senate Omnibus Higher Education Bill. The only provision in this bill of specific interest to MACTE is the inclusion of a FY2016 appropriation of \$175,000 to the MnSCU Board for up to two pilot programs for year-long student teaching. This bill contains no policy language regarding on-going expectations for year-long student teaching.

Next Steps. All of these bills will now move on to broader funding committees (Taxes and Ways and Means in the House and Finance and Taxes in the Senate) before being heard on the floor of each chamber and then to conference committees. There are items in both K-12 bills of great concern to MACTE, so watch for calls to action in the next few weeks.