

## **MACTE Legislative Update, 4.09.15**

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**The Session to Date.** The first three months of the 2015 legislative session seem to have flown by with a wide array of bills introduced and heard addressing various elements of teacher preparation and licensure. Much of this was driven by the rising chorus of voices from districts across the state that are having increasing problems finding qualified teachers to staff their classrooms. Although these have been consistently referred to as the result of teacher shortages, we have not been the only ones identifying other problems (e.g., teacher bashing, low pay, poor working conditions, high turn-over of young teachers, overemphasis on testing) as major contributors to the difficulties districts are facing in meeting their hiring needs.

Other issues have come largely from the so-called “reform” groups focusing especially on quality and diversity and complaining about what they describe as a vast, bureaucratic set of requirements and system for issuing licenses. Not incidentally, an already over-burdened Board of Teaching staff has been further diverted from important issues by the need to respond to lawsuits seeking quick redress for individuals not immediately awarded full licensure.

We have tried to position MACTE in these debates as a source of solid factual information committed to ensuring quality teachers for Minnesota classrooms. We have met with individual legislators and sought to work collaboratively with other educational organization colleagues in addressing the dozens of teacher preparation and licensure bills. We have also limited our public comments to bills on these specific subjects in order to maintain a clear focus on preparation and licensure, even though we know many of you are deeply interested in and committed to other educational issues being discussed.

**Tracking Bills.** It can be challenging to keep track of bills as they move through the legislature, not only because of amendments made in committees that may take a few days to appear on-line but also because some are folded into larger omnibus bills while others will move both separately and in omnibus bills to increase the chances of enactment. This is especially the case this year in the House, where provisions contained in HF 2 (which has already passed on the floor of the House) are also contained in the omnibus policy bill, HF 1591.

In the next six weeks, we will continue to keep a close eye on the following bills. As they move forward, we may send out requests (with talking points) that you contact your legislators about them:

**Omnibus Policy**, HF 1591 and SF 1495

**Year-long Student Teaching**, HF 384 and SF 959

**Teacher Prep and Licensure Data Reporting**, HF 244 and SF 664

**Alternative Preparation Program Competitive Grants**, HF 1347 and SF 1273

**Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness**, HF 1170 and SF (and SF 844)