

MACTE Weekly Legislative Update, 5.18.15

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CALL TO ACTION. This weekly update includes a request that you contact Governor Dayton's office asking that he veto the E-12 education omnibus bill. Although MACTE hasn't taken a position on the primary stumbling blocks involving funding, there are several very problematic policy changes regarding teacher preparation and licensure in the bill that might be changed if it is "re-opened" in response to a veto. Please read the summary below and, if you are willing, call the Governor's office at [651.201.3400](tel:651.201.3400) or [1.800.657.3717](tel:1.800.657.3717) with the simple message: "**Please veto the E-12 Education Omnibus Bill so that legislators can return to the table to reconsider its funding and policy provisions.**" Read on for more information and background.

Down to the wire. After several weeks when little happened publicly, things finally started moving late last week at the legislature once leadership agreed to "targets" (the total amount to be spent in each broad category). However, while most of the agreements included all three parties (House, Senate, and Governor), the E-12 target reflected agreement only between House Speaker Kurt Daudt and Majority Leader Tom Bakk. Hence the current drama over the E-12 omnibus bill, which has now passed both legislative bodies, though with little DFL support in the House. Here's a quick summary of some key provisions in the bills of specific interest to MACTE.

The **Higher Education Conference Committee** bill included \$200,000 each year for a new Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program; \$200,000 in FY 2016 for up to two state university school year-long student teaching pilots; and \$250,000 each year of the biennium for Southwest Minnesota State University to develop a program leading to agriculture education licensure. We had obviously hoped for more for the loan forgiveness program, but since the Senate bill didn't include any funding in their omnibus bill, getting it established and operating is a small win and its funding will be on-going under this budget. Thanks to those of you who made calls to conference committee members urging them to fund this important effort to address teacher supply in Minnesota.

The **E-12 Education Conference Committee** was one of the last to finish its bill in the early morning hours on Sunday. There are some good changes in the bill regarding teacher licensure (including the Senate's language on testing that gives the BOT more flexibility in determining what instruments can be used), and some of the worst proposed changes did not make it into the final bill (like removing from the BOT the authority to approve or disapprove requests for non-licensed community experts). But the Senate did agree to some House language regarding teachers prepared outside Minnesota, including language to allow, though not require, issuing a license based only on licensure in another state and passing applicable tests; included House language on data reporting on teacher and administrator preparation programs; made changes in the alternative preparation programs language requiring the use of nontraditional criteria to determine instructor qualifications and allowing individuals with only a baccalaureate degree to serve as instructors; addressing problems of candidates who haven't been able to pass the basic skills test by allowing "restricted" licenses limited to the requesting district or charter school; and setting impossible deadlines for some BOT rulemaking. The bottom line is that while preparation and licensure changes could have been much worse, both parties were willing to accept some revisions with the potential to undermine the high quality standards that have long been a hallmark of Minnesota teacher licensure.