

MACTE Weekly Legislative Report, 3.18.16
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Week Two Continues at Rapid Pace. Things continued to move quickly at the legislature this week as more and more bills were introduced and heard in committees. Most of the bills heard to date involving teacher preparation and licensure are related to the findings and recommendations of the OLA report. This week, both bodies heard bills that would create legislative working groups to dig into and make recommendations based on the OLA report (HF 2814, HF 2861, and SF 2651). MACTE testified on all three bills, recommending that any group formed should include experienced professionals, including practicing classroom teachers and individuals knowledgeable about teacher preparation and licensure (currently, all bills envision groups made up entirely of legislators). Education Minnesota shared the same recommendation in each body. All three bills were re-referred to Government Operations Committees and no doubt will ultimately be considered for inclusion in the education omnibus bill.

Another bill heard this week was SF 2551 (author Senator Carla Nelson, Rochester), which would direct the Board of Teaching to promulgate rules for a tiered licensure system, essentially similar to that described in the OLA report, by April 1, 2017. MACTE testified that although we support the concept of a tiered licensure system and believe the BOT is clearly the right body to develop the rules, we believe this step should be part of the broader response envisioned in the working group bills described above. It was clear that many senators shared this perspective. The bill was laid on the table for possible inclusion in the omnibus bill (meaning it wasn't passed or defeated but may be considered further once the committee is ready to pull together its final bill).

Finally, the Senate Education Committee heard SF 2434 (authors Senator Kevin Dahle and Eric Pratt) that would implement an array of language changes in statute proposed by BOT to make licensure-related terms more clear and consistent and to address a few issues relative to those initially prepared out-of-state. MACTE was prepared to testify in support of this bill, but the chair moved quickly to action without taking much testimony.

Another Busy Week Ahead. Next week, both the Education Policy Innovation Committee and the Senate Education Committee will hear a number of bills addressing teacher shortages and the need for more diverse teachers. Specifically, on Tuesday morning, 3.22, the Senate committee will take up SFs 2513, 2516, 2553, 2908, and 2610 and the House will take up HF 2944, which is the companion bill to SF 2610. In addition, on Wednesday, 3.23, the Senate will hear a bill authored by Senator Bonoff focused on a CUE grant program. Because this bill does not yet have a bill number, it cannot be looked up and read at this time. MACTE will be prepared to testify on any of these bills on which a position seems important and appropriate. I encourage you to look up the bills on-line, share your thoughts with me, and attend any of these hearings in which you are interested.

Upcoming Easter Break. Legislators will take a short Easter break from Friday, 3.25 until Tuesday, 3.29 (there will also be a Passover break from Friday, 4.22 until Monday, 4.25). With legislators home in their districts, this would be a good time to meet with them to share information about your programs along with MACTE's issues and concerns. Please refer to the document on our website providing guidance for planning and carrying out these meetings and let me know if you have questions. I would also be grateful to hear reports about any meetings or conversations you have with legislators.