

MACTE Legislative Report, 4.03.16
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Omnibus P-12 Policy Bills Finished. After a very busy week, culminating with the first committee deadline of the 2016 session, both the Senate Education Committee and the House Education Policy Innovation Committee completed work on their omnibus policy bills. (We were holding this report hoping the final versions would be posted before sending it out, but they are not yet up.)

The omnibus Senate policy bill is SF 2744. Most of the items of relevance to MACTE are contained in Article 7, including language “fixes” developed by BOT that will enable the current rule-making process to be completed with language identifying various licenses and permissions more clearly and consistently. Also included are provisions requiring school district reports to include data on licensed teachers who identify as non-Caucasian and on the number of non-licensed community experts providing instruction; requiring the BOT to include an endorsement for dual credit instruction on high school teachers’ licenses; creating a Career and Technical Educator Licensing Advisory Task Force; establishing a legislative task force on teacher licensure to study and make recommendations based on the OLA report; and focusing on equity and diversity in language reflecting the work of the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota.

The omnibus House policy bill is HF 3066. It includes little language focused on teacher preparation and licensure other than creation of an OLA-focused task force similar to that in the senate bill and a requirement that the BOT submit a report “listing all the statutory and rule requirements on teacher preparation, examinations, and training applicable to candidates for teacher licensure, by type of license; and all the statutory and rule requirements on continuing education applicable to teachers seeking to renew their full professional teaching license.” A major disappointment is that the BOT language fixes described above are not included in this bill. Rep. Davnie introduced an amendment on Thursday that would have added this to the bill, but it was voted down on a party line vote. From a conversation after the hearing with Rep. Sondra Erickson, it seemed that she supported much, but not all, of the amendment and there was an indication that it may be discussed further by the House Education Finance Committee. This may mean that the House plans to have a single omnibus education bill, while we’re hearing that the Senate is contemplating two separate (one policy, one finance) education bills.

Other Bills of Interest. Several other bills that MACTE is tracking were heard last week. In the House higher education committee, we testified against HF 3165, which would establish a competitive grant opportunity to which only alternative and “experimental” licensure programs could apply. We noted among other things that there is still only one alternative program operating in Minnesota and that the term “experimental” is not defined anywhere relative to teacher preparation programs. House Education Finance took up HF 3340, which would increase CUE funding significantly and make it available to programs besides the four current CUE programs. We generally supported the bill but argued against the provision requiring that at least half of the \$5 million be awarded to alternative and nonconventional programs, nothing that of this already small number of programs, half have no focus on diversity. We made it clear that our comments had no bearing on the quality and value of nonconventional programs, all of which are offered by MACTE institutions, but that we thought all of the funding should be awarded on the basis of the quality and appropriateness of proposals submitted. Also, HF 2805 and SF 2516), both of which would provide funding for Grow Your Own programs in cities of the first class, advanced, as did SF 2610 in the Senate Higher Education Committee.