

MACTE End-of-Session Legislative Report, 5.25.16
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Another session that turned “wild and crazy” at the end is now history. As has been widely reported, the legislature completed work on tax and supplemental budget bills, as well as a few more specific pieces of legislation. They were not able to reach agreement on bonding and transportation bills, both of which were identified as top priorities for all parties concerned. It remains puzzling to many observers how issues identified as critical before the start of the session could remain undone 11 weeks later. Perhaps more importantly, criticisms are growing about the extent to which decisions have been made, particularly in the last two years, by a tiny number of legislative leaders, leaving not only the public but also most members of the House and Senate out of the discussions. It remains to be seen how these issues will impact elections in November.

As previously reported, all of the E-12 and higher education legislation was included in the comprehensive supplemental budget bill which did pass both bodies and has now been sent to the Governor for his signature. Although he had earlier expressed reservations about signing any major bills unless all four were passed, at present it sounds like he will sign the tax and supplemental budget bills. If so, there will be significant (though mostly one-time) money focused on strategies to address the teacher shortage and advance equity in Minnesota. Specifically, the conference committee version of HF 2749 includes \$2.2 million for teacher shortage loan forgiveness, \$2.8 million for student teacher grants, \$1.5 million for para-professional pathways to licensure, \$460,000 for American Indian Teacher Preparation grants, and \$1.09 million for CUE in FY 2017. Some of these are all new dollars (such as the student teacher grants) and others reflect increases over previously funded programs (an example are the CUE grants, which include an increase of \$310,000 over the previous appropriation). In addition, the Board of Teaching received a much-needed one-time increase to \$1.018 million for FY 2017.

In terms of policy language, scattered throughout the education portions of the bill are references to equity and teacher diversity and also the changes sought by BOT to make references to categories of licensure more clear and consistent (the latter should enable them to complete the rule-making process currently underway). One-year professional licenses for Montessori teachers (p.411) and waivers for some CTE teachers (p.411) were also included in the final bill, as were the establishment of a CTE advisory task force with a focus on licensure (pp.441-442) and a legislative study group to address the findings and recommendations of the OLA report (pp.442-443). A provision was also included specifying that the name of the teacher preparation program from which a teacher graduated shall be included on their license (p.415). The only troubling language involves teachers prepared out-of-state (p.420), with confusing language that first makes references to options for a series of one-year professional licenses followed by a reference to a five-year professional license for those who have passed all tests and completed the Human Relations

requirement. We hope that this confusing and troublesome language can be improved by the OLA study group.

The higher education portion of the bill includes technical language changes regarding the teacher shortage loan forgiveness program (p.10); a requirement that all teacher preparation programs provide students with information prepared by the Commissioner of Education regarding available loan forgiveness opportunities (p.12); promotion by the Office of Higher Education of a full array of federal loan forgiveness options (pp11-12); and equity grant funding for which teacher preparation programs and institutions are presumably eligible to apply (pp.22-24).

Overall, we can be pleased that most of our priorities were addressed by, and most of the language to which we strongly objected not included in, the final bill. You may wish to check out the websites of Students for Equity in Education, the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, and Parents United for Public Schools for further reporting on and insights about the final supplemental budget bill.

A last word – we will be following closely the work of the legislative study group that will be formed this summer to respond to the OLA report and may share informational updates with you from time to time over the course of the next seven months. In addition, MEC will begin this summer to work on strategies to more fully engage many of you during the 2017 session when we can expect to see major legislation introduced to revise licensure-related statutes. It will be critical that MACTE be “at the table” as much as possible as this important work progresses, and we will be counting on you to help us shape and advance our message.