

2.27.17 MACTE Weekly Legislative Update
Prepared by Cyndy Crist MACTE Legislative and Policy Liaison

Here We Go.

Things are starting to move rapidly at the Capitol, and bills focusing on teacher preparation and licensure governance and tiered licensure have now been introduced in both the House and Senate. In the House, two previously separate bills have now been merged into one. HF 140, which was initially introduced as a placeholder for more substantive legislation, has now been amended to incorporate a slightly revised version of HF 1079, the more detailed bill. This was likely done, at least in part, to allow SF 4 to become a companion bill to HF 140.

Although companions, these bills are far from identical. The good news is that both retain a professional standards board as a locus for newly combined functions of licensure policy, preparation standards, and the issuing of licenses. Unfortunately, both have eliminated the single higher education seat on the board, which retains a majority of teachers in both versions with a total of nine members in the Senate bill and eleven in the House bill. MACTE will continue to advocate for restoring the higher ed position (and I was pleased to hear both BOT and EdMN representatives advocate for it as well during their House testimony last week). That said, relative to other issues in both bills, this may not be the most important issue upon which to focus since there are other vehicles for us to offer our insights, expertise, and input.

More problematic are changes to our licensure system that would be made in the two approaches to tiered licensure offered by the House and Senate. Because there are so many specifics, I won't try to summarize them here but instead suggest you read both bills on the legislative website. But to briefly offer a few specifics, I expect that we will argue against provisions that would let someone become licensed with little more proof than passing required tests and that would, in a variety of other ways, significantly water down our current licensure standards. Some would also put too many decisions in the hands of local school district personnel, undermining that value and purpose of statewide standards for teacher licensure.

Please make yourself familiar with these bills, which have begun moving through committees (the House bill was passed out of the Education Innovation Policy committee last week and will be taken up in the Government Operations committee on 2.28 before moving on to Public Safety and then Education Finance, and the Senate bill will have its first hearing in Senate E-12 Policy on Thursday, 3.02), and stay tuned for possible calls to action in support of changes that your MACTE executive committee (with input from any of you who wish to share your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns with me and/or MEC members) decides to advocate.

Coalition Bills Also Moving.

As noted in an update recently sent on behalf of Paul Spies, two sets of bills crafted by the Coalition for Increasing Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers will shortly be taken up in the legislature. One set of bills that would provide for

scholarships for teacher candidates of color and grants for student teaching in shortage areas will be heard in the higher education committees. The other bills, which contain both policy language changes and funding provisions, will be taken up by the E-12 committees. You will hear from me and/or Paul as these bills are scheduled for hearings and when we need members or students to testify or directly contact committee members.