

3.03.17 MACTE Weekly Legislative Update
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Major Licensure Bills Advancing.

Both HF 140 and SF 4 have passed out of their “home” committees and started along the path to other committees on their way to presumably being incorporated into omnibus bills. Specifically, here’s where things stand.

HF 140, which passed out of the House Education Innovation Policy Committee on 2.21, was taken up in the Government Operations Committee on 2.28 and Public Safety on 3.02. Each enacted small amendments related to their purview and then passed the amended bill, which will be taken up next by the House Education Finance Committee, presumably during the week of 3.06. In addition, the House Omnibus Policy Bill, HF 1376, will be released on Monday, 3.06 and taken up in committee on 3.07. At this time, it is unclear whether any of the policy provisions of HF 140 or other licensure-related bills (such as HF 1663 described below) will be included in that bill instead of, or in addition to, in the omnibus finance bill. Anyone interested in joining me at the hearing is welcome to do so.

SF 4 was heard in the Senate E-12 Policy Committee on 3.02 and passed with one minor amendment. A roster of more than twenty individuals testified, including several faculty and students from MACTE institutions. Concerns expressed by our members and students focused primarily on testing and tiered licensure provisions. I also briefly highlighted some governance issues, including a request to retain a higher education member on the board. Some senators expressed support for our positions but we have not yet swayed a majority of the committee to our perspective.

Other Bills Being Tracked.

Although quite a few other bills have been introduced with the potential to impact teacher preparation and licensure, only a few have been heard. One is HF 1663, which would, among other things, modify alternative teacher preparation and compensation programs, create a teacher shortage task force, and expand concurrent enrollment teacher program provisions. I testified on behalf of MACTE on 3.02, focusing on provisions we support (including funding for teacher shortage loan forgiveness and student teacher in shortage area grants and expanding CUE funding to additional colleges and universities); issues of concern (various changes that would create lower standards for alternative preparation providers and programs compared to “traditional” programs); and questions about funding to expand alternative preparation programs, including why non-Minnesota entities would be eligible but not “traditional” programs that might wish to propose experimental programs. The bill was re-referred to Government Operations (largely because of the task force it would create) and will presumably be heard next week before moving on to Education Finance.

A number of bills from the Coalition for Increased Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers, which have been previously described by me and, in more detail, by Paul Spies, will be heard in E-12 and higher education committees next week. These bills contain both funding and policy provisions with the potential to improve the recruitment, retention, and preparation of a more diverse teaching force.