

3.19.17 MACTE Weekly Legislative Update
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Licensure Bills Move Closer to Floor Action

With eight weeks of the legislative session remaining (with an Easter/Passover break during the week of April 10) and the first two committee deadlines now past, action is moving toward development of comprehensive bills and/or action by the full House and Senate. As previously reported, the major licensure overhaul bills, HF 140 and SF 4, are moving separately from the omnibus bills that will emerge shortly. For both, the next (and likely final) step before floor action will be hearings in the overall finance committees – House Ways and Means (where HF 140 is scheduled to be heard on Monday, 3.20) and Senate Finance (on a date not yet determined). In these two committees, the focus is primarily on projected costs via Fiscal Notes developed by relevant agencies. Since those documents have not yet been made public, we don't know what the estimated costs are.

The most recent action on HF 140 took place two weeks ago and was previously reported. SF 4 was discussed on Friday, 3.17 in the Senate E-12 Finance Committee. A few changes have been made, including reducing the number of times a Tier 3 license can be renewed from three to one, and a commitment was made by chief author Eric Pratt to address concerns about unlimited renewals of a Tier 1 license. During the hearing, Senator Chuck Wiger introduced an amendment to add back a higher education representative to the board. After some discussion, the amendment was defeated on a party line vote. I testified for MACTE in support of that action as well as on specific concerns with the tiered licensure structure (such as the possibility that someone could teach for an extended period of time under Tiers 2 and 3 with little more than passing scores on the three required tests). We will continue to track both bills closely and let you know when they are going to be taken up by the full House and Senate, a time when contacts with your legislators will be important.

Teacher Shortage Bills Advance

Two others bill that we are watching closely are the so-called teacher shortage bills, HF 1663 and SF 1725. While there are a number of excellent provisions in both, including funding for student teaching stipends and loan forgiveness, there is also funding to expand alternative preparation programs and some problematic language regarding program requirements for alternative pathways. HF 1663 was taken up and amended on Thursday, 3.16 in Education Finance. SF 1725 has not yet been heard in the E-12 Finance Committee, although a bill with some similar provisions, SF 1756, has been heard in Senate E-12 Policy and referred to E-12 Finance.

Coalition Bills Have Good Momentum

You will be receiving a separate update from the Coalition regarding their E-12 and higher ed bills. As each has been heard, a strong array of individuals has testified on their behalf. They seem likely to be included in the higher ed and E-12 omnibus bills, though with spending targets just emerging from the leadership in the House and Senate, it is not yet clear how much funding will be devoted to their provisions.

Last Call for Day at the Capitol

There are still only a handful of MACTE members who have signed up for a Day at the Capitol. I can schedule meetings for however many of you want to participate, though we can't hope to have the same kind of impact if there are just a few of us. Please let me know ASAP if you would like to join us. This is an important year to have our voices heard.