

# Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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TO: Senator Carla Nelson  
Senator Eric Pratt  
Senator Bill Weber  
Senator Chuck Wiger  
Senator Justin Eichorn  
Representative Jenifer Loon  
Representative Sondra Erickson  
Representative Peggy Bennett  
Representative Mary Murphy  
Representative Ron Kresha

FROM: Connie Gayle, MACTE President  
Cyndy Crist, MACTE Legislative and Policy Liaison

We are writing on behalf of the 31 member colleges and universities of the Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education to share our thoughts about several issues contained within the two major E-12 education bills currently under consideration by the E-12 Education Conference Committee. While there are many provisions of interest and concern to our members, including items we strongly support, we will highlight just a few that we believe have the potential for the greatest impact on the quality and supply of teachers for Minnesota's E-12 schools and students and the communities they serve.

The matter of greatest concern to us is the tiered licensure system you are crafting. We believe we all share the same goals and differ only in our vision of how we, as a state, can realize those goals. Our current system is built on three essential means of demonstrating that candidates have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for initial licensure – completion of coursework that delivers all required standards, successful completion of student teaching, and passing scores on licensure tests. However, several tiers offer these as alternatives, and not until Tier 4 must candidates offer all three pieces of evidence in some form. For example, with language stating that candidates must “meet one of the following” (Senate) or “two of the following” (House), candidates could hold Tier 2 and 3 licenses for as much as 12 years (Senate) or four years (House version) with little more than passing scores on licensing tests and completion of human relations coursework.

We are also deeply concerned about the current unlimited renewals of the Tier 1 license in the Senate bill. While we recognize that school districts need some flexibility in meeting their need for teachers who can deliver the full curriculum, we believe that all students deserve teachers who have skills in delivering the curriculum and understanding how students learn as well as knowing course-specific content. While we also believe that school boards and school administrators want the best possible teachers in all their classrooms, we also recognize that there are many pressures on them that can make it difficult to uphold the high standards they prefer. We believe that it is the state's responsibility to hold higher standards and consistent standards for teacher licensure and to ensure funding and other supports adequate to meet districts' operating needs.

It seems that one major problem that the proposed tiered licensure system is seeking to correct – namely, an inadequate supply of Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers – has resulted in a set of criteria that could be applied much more broadly and, we believe, inappropriately. We support suggestions that have been made to address CTE clearly and separately within the tiered licensure structure so that criteria like two-year degrees and “sufficient professional credentials” will be focused on CTE only.

In contrast to the concerns identified above, we do strongly support four other provisions in the Senate's version of HF 140: the requirement of a baccalaureate for all licenses except CTE licenses; the requirement that districts provide evidence of attempting to hire a Tier 2, 3, or 4-licensed teacher before seeking to hire a Tier 1 teacher; the assessment options offered for Tier 3 and 4 teachers; and the revised language regarding alternative preparation programs.

We have heard significant concerns from our special education faculty about some of the language in the bills regarding Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blind and Visually Impaired, Oral/Aural, and ABS. First, we have concerns about specifically naming some licensure areas in statute rather than allowing the professional standards board to develop and implement licensure rules and standards in all fields. Second, we are concerned that some references, such as those regarding testing, do not accurately reflect assessment differences in some of these fields.

We also have a concern about the requirement for Tier Four in House File 140 that to gain this licensure, all candidates must have three years of teaching experience in Minnesota. This would unfairly disadvantage individuals who complete licensure programs in Minnesota and successfully meet all requirements, choose to begin their teaching career in another state, and then return to Minnesota. A broader requirement of three years of successful teaching seems to us to be more appropriate.

Beyond tiered licensure, we wish to address several other issues:

- (1) We continue to believe that it is important to have a representative of a teacher preparation program on the licensing board and support the change made in HF 140 to that end;
- (2) We believe it would be extremely problematic to replace the full board at once and recommend that the staggered terms recommended be applied to positions on the board as they come up for appointment so that the Board can retain some experienced members as it grapples with the major changes it is likely to be charged to undertake;
- (3) We believe that requiring implementation of major licensure changes by July 1, 2018 is unrealistic and should be extended to ensure that all the changes outlined in legislation can be implemented effectively;
- (4) We believe that both bills have made significant progress toward holding all preparation programs to the same standards and urge you to ensure this across the board;
- (5) Although we have heard some assurances about intent to the contrary, we remain concerned about the language seeming to state that the new licensing board must require approved college or university-based teacher preparation programs throughout the state to develop alternative pathways for certifying and licensing high school CTE teachers. We believe the language needs to be changed to make its intent clear.

We are grateful for your continuing efforts to ensure an adequate supply of highly qualified teachers who can help the state achieve its education goals and share our thoughts based on our desire to partner with you to meet those goals. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and suggestions.