

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my concerns with HF 1376. As a previous principal for several years and now as a district administrator who supports prospective teachers, I believe that this bill will move us away from the goal of increasing teachers of color and addressing the opportunity gap in Minnesota.

I work for Intermediate School District 287. As an intermediate, we work to support eleven member districts and the majority of students we serve are in setting IV special education placements. Since 2015, I have been directly involved in the hiring of special education staff to serve our students. Every year, we have lacked enough candidates to fill vital positions and previously had many non-licensed community experts filling this role until the tiered system and PELSB came to be created.

As a principal, I hoped that the tiered system would make things easier for schools to locate and hire qualified teachers. However, that has not been the case. We have had to rely on many Tier 1 teachers to fill our open positions due to the needs of students we serve, many of whom are students of color. I am concerned about the language related to limiting Tier 1 renewals, particularly for schools and districts in shortage areas, such as special education.

I recognize that we want our teachers to be qualified and have content and pedagogy training. We have worked to get staff into teacher education programs that have allowed us to access Tier 2 licenses for some. I am concerned about the proposed change that does not provide a timeline for Tier 1 and Tier 2 license renewals by PELSB so that we can ensure staff is trained and ready to teach our students from the beginning of the school year.

In the last year, our country has talked a lot about systemic racism. I believe that people unintentionally create or enforce laws that they see as just. However, when you consider the demographics of those who hold Tier 1 and Tier 2 licenses, I hope it is evident who will be disproportionately impacted by this change. I believe that these provisions should be removed from the bill.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this letter.

Sincerely,

Tonya Allen, MSW, Ed.S.

Director of Mental Health and Family Engagement
District 287