

March 1, 2021

Dear Chair Richardson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to hear my feedback on HF1376. My name is Maggie Borman. I have been in education for 10 years, all of them teaching and leading at low-income charter schools across Minneapolis. Today I am writing on behalf of myself, Loy Woelber (Superintendent of Westbrook Walnut Grove #2898/ Fulda #505/ Lake Benton #404) and Katie Groh de Aviña (Executive Director of El Colegio High School). We are all former members of the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). As founding members of the board who helped write the rules to implement tiered licensure, we want to urge you to vote against this problematic bill.

The intent of the tiered licensure legislation was to open up more, diverse pathways into the classroom. And it has been working. Currently 21% of all teachers of color in Minnesota are on Tier 1 or Tier 2 licenses! Also many schools use Tier 1 or 2 licenses to fill chronic open positions, like special education. During our time on PELSB, every meeting we would hear from school leaders how important it was to have these Tier 1 and 2 licenses granted. They would tell us how amazing this candidate was, or how they had only one other applicant, or why the other Tier 3 and Tier 4 applicants were not the right fit. They would beg us to approve Tier 1 and Tier 2 licenses for diverse, qualified, passionate teachers. Schools know their context and students better than we ever could. They need to have the flexibility to hire who they think will be able to best serve their students. This bill goes directly against this principle by removing several important licensure pathways and by pushing out thousands of dedicated teachers already serving our students.

There are many problematic parts of this bill. But as former PELSB members, there are two that we absolutely oppose:

- 1) Limiting the options to obtain a Tier 2 license. The intent of a Tier 2 license was to give those who are not enrolled in traditional teacher preparation, but have other important qualifications, a pathway into the classroom. Currently this includes, for example, teachers who have two years of teaching experience and can pass the appropriate MTLEs. By removing all of these options except the most traditional of the two (being enrolled in teacher preparation or holding a master's degree), you will eliminate many talented professionals who want to work with kids.
- 2) Removing the pathway from a Tier 2 to a Tier 3 license. Currently, a Tier 2 teacher with 3 years of experience and proven effectiveness can obtain a permanent, Tier 3 license. Some of the best educators I have worked with in my education career were Tier 2 teachers. If a Tier 2 teacher has proven they are effective, why would we want to mandate a school to remove them from the classroom? They would be forced to enroll in

traditional teacher preparation, which is costly and time intensive. Removing this pathway will push effective educators (many of whom are teachers of color or filling shortage areas) out of the profession.

PELSB, as well as much of the MN legislature, have affirmed their support for diversifying our teaching force. Currently, just 1 in 20 Minnesota educators are people of color. Looking at PELSB data since tiered licensure went into effect, Tier 1 and Tier 2 licenses are some of the most immediate and effective strategies we have to bring more teachers of color into the classroom. They are also some of the only immediate solutions we have for shortage areas like special education. Including these two harmful changes would erect barriers to recruiting non-traditional and diverse people into teaching, push out thousands of teachers who are already in our classrooms and serving our students, and continue to perpetuate the status quo that has led to a 96% white teacher workforce. I would be happy to answer any questions you have or discuss this issue further. Thank you for your time.

Best,  
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