

Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in regard to HF 3965. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) oversees the state standards required to be a licensed teacher in Minnesota and is responsible for preparing the biennial Teacher Supply and Demand report.

One of PELSB's primary goals is to grow, support, and diversify Minnesota's educator workforce. We believe quality data helps us understand the full spectrum of the teacher shortage and helps establish effective policy to address the shortage. PELSB also believes that every individual who steps into a classroom to educate students should be honored for the benefits they bring to students and the work that they do.

While much of what is proposed in HF 3965 will enhance data collection and our understanding of teacher shortage areas, Section 1 would undermine these efforts. Section 1 would drastically change the way the State defines a "shortage." Currently, PELSB follows national guidelines on defining teacher shortage based on assignments filled by individuals who do not hold a permanent license for the assignment. Changing this definition will have a devastating effect on the delineation of shortage areas for federal TEACH grants and may impact how state grants and scholarships are allocated.

The change made in Section 1 actually decreases our ability to understand the nuances of teacher shortage areas. The vast majority of districts attempt to hire a permanently licensed Tier 3 or Tier 4 teacher for their unfilled assignments. When they are unable to find a tier 3 or tier 4 teacher, they will assess other options to fill these positions, including applying for a tier 1 or a tier 2 license with an individual who meets these different requirements or applying for an out-of-field permission for a tier 3 or tier 4 teacher. These filled positions still represent a teacher shortage. This delineation does not lessen the value that these individuals bring to Minnesota students and schools. It merely ensures we are attentive to the full scope of the teacher shortage.

PELSB recognizes the need for additional data to provide a more detailed picture of teacher shortages. PELSB encourages legislators to work with PELSB, school administrators (who will be required to provide the data), the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Department of Education, and the Office of Higher Education to ensure any changes to shortage area definitions result in an accurate and meaningful picture of the shortage of teachers in Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Alex Liuzzi

PELSB, Executive Director



Brian Rappe

PELSB, Chair