

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: 3/16/21 HF1376

To: Members of the Education Finance Committee

From: Dr. Rhonda Bonnstetter

Affiliation (ex. student, parent, advocacy organization): Minnesota Association for Colleges of Teacher Education

City of Residence: Marshall, MN

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Dear Representative Davnie and Committee members,

My name is Dr. Rhonda Bonnstetter. I am a Professor of Education at Southwest Minnesota State University, and president of the Minnesota Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, or MACTE, which represents all 31 of the PELSB-approved higher education teacher preparation programs in Minnesota.

MACTE is supportive of all paths to teacher licensure that require candidates to meet the same standards required by our state's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board. This includes traditional 4-year programs, 2-year transfer pathways, non-conventional and alternative preparation programs, and the licensure-by portfolio-option. In each case, candidates are required to provide evidence that they have mastered the same set of standards for pedagogy and content knowledge. MACTE is in support of HF 1376 and in particular, the change that would remove the option of moving to a fully renewable Tier 3 license after teaching for 3 years on a Tier 2 license without evidence of being placed on an improvement plan. Candidates seeking the Tier 3 license via this pathway have not evidenced meeting the teacher licensure standards set forth by PELSB other than by passing multiple-choice tests in content and pedagogy. This would appear to be in conflict with Sec. 11 on Licensing which states, "The board must not delegate its authority to make all licensing decisions with respect to candidates for teacher licensure. The board must evaluate candidates for compliance with statutory or rule requirements for licensure and develop licensure verification requirements." These candidates do not complete the board approved performance assessment nor do they have to show evidence of meeting PELSB teacher licensure standards. Only their building administrators have evaluated their performance.

We don't allow those seeking a driver's license to obtain their license by taking the written test and showing that they haven't had an accident in the last three years; they are required to pass a 'behind the wheel' performance assessment to show that they have met all requirements for that license. Candidates seeking the Tier 3 renewable license have multiple pathways available to them, from traditional, nonconventional, and alternative preparation options, and licensure by portfolio, which all provide evidence of meeting the PELSB standards for licensure. Please support this change to the Tiered Licensure system so that all teachers holding a Tier 3 license will have met the high standards for teacher licensure that Minnesotans expect and our children deserve.



March 15, 2021

Dear Chair Davnie and members of the House Education Finance Committee,

On behalf of Educators for Excellence - Minnesota (E4E), a teacher-led nonprofit with approximately 2,300 members across the state, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House File 1376.

E4E strongly opposes this bill. Each day we grieve the negative consequences of institutional racism. This is the time for measures that bring us closer to equity, and not further away. This legislative session has been positive in the discourse toward teacher diversity, but some provisions in the education omnibus bill, HF 1376, would restrict pathways to teacher licensure. I am calling on you to oppose these provisions and protect the futures of diverse teachers in Minnesota.

**Sixty percent of E4E members are teachers of color and they strongly oppose the provisions that would undo our state's tiered teacher licensure system.** Doing so will destroy more than five years of progress toward increasing teacher diversity in a state where 94% of the teachers' workforce is white.

Research confirms there are social, emotional, and academic benefits to having teachers of color for both white students and students of color. Currently, however, a child's chance of having an African-American or Latino male teacher during his or her K-12 experience is one in 50, a statistic we find unacceptable.

As a licensed Tier 4 teacher who began teaching under what is now known as a Tier 1 license, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to protect pathways into the profession for teachers like me. This committee has spent significant time and attention this session on raising the voices of diverse educators. It would be a shame to walk back the years of progress we've made through Minnesota's tiered licensure system in making the state's teacher workforce more diverse.

Please protect our state's tiered teacher licensure system as it exists today. This system is working and there is no need to change it.

I'd be happy to connect you with our members should you be interested in hearing directly from teachers who would be most impacted if this bill becomes law.

Thank you,

Paula Cole  
Executive Director  
Educators for Excellence- Minnesota

Minnesota House of Representatives  
Education Finance Committee  
Chair – Davnie  
March 16, 2021

*My son who has nonverbal autism was suspended by teacher Kelly Morris and principal Jaysen Anderson from Jefferson High School on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5:18pm in 2018. The teacher neglected to give him his communication device, disrupted his routine then called the principal and security on my kid.*

*I will never forget that day.*



*I never took him back. My son now goes to a charter school which has been simply wonderful. They understand he has a disability and does not comprehend suspension nor cause/effect.*

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**Re: HF 1376 (opposing)**

Dear Mr. Chair and Members, many thanks for the opportunity to testify today and speak for my son and other children like him.

As you are all aware Minnesota has a horrible and a shameful education disparity gap. One of the reasons for education gap is teachers not reflecting the students. I often wonder if my son's teacher reflected him, would the outcome have been different.

The current tier system was designed with a bipartisan manner that took everyone's perspectives to ensure equality and equity. Does it need improvement to increase teachers of color? You betcha However, what HF 1376 does is dismantle it.

PELSB can sugar coat this bill all day long, but if it decreases teachers of color like a duck, if it makes hard for teachers who reflect the students to be in the classrooms like a duck; then it is a duck. The fact that there have been current teachers, principals and school administrators united in their opposition to this bill speaks volumes of the damage it will do.

I hope our children's education is prioritized not politicized.

As always, I thank you for your time.

Idil – Somali Autism Mom

# Preserving Pathways to the Classroom through Tiered Licensure: Unintended Consequences of HF 1376

## LICENSURE BARRIERS WOULD CLOSE PATHWAYS TO THE CLASSROOM

House File 1376 includes harmful policies that will place unnecessary hurdles between great teachers and Minnesota students, failing to honor the many skills, experiences, and pathways that can make a teacher great. It would push high-quality teachers out of the profession at a time when many schools and districts are struggling to staff their classrooms. The bill would:

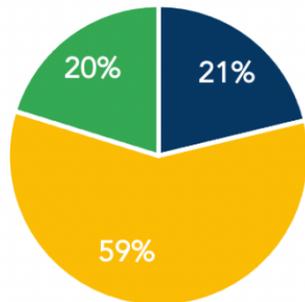
1. Take away many teachers' Tier 2 licenses by **eliminating several pathways into the profession.**
2. **Block effective Tier 2 teachers from advancing to Tier 3**, ignoring years of experience and student impact.
3. Make it harder for district and school leaders to fill shortage areas, including teachers of color, by **reducing the number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 renewals.**
4. Lower standards by **no longer requiring a Tier 4 master teacher have a good evaluation.**

## LICENSURE BARRIERS WOULD DEVASTATE TEACHER DIVERSITY

Unnecessarily capping licensure renewals and restricting employment for Tier 1 and Tier 2 teachers **could push out nearly a quarter of our current educators of color** without ever considering their effectiveness and the value they bring to the classroom.

Tier 1 or Tier 2 Licenses, 2019-2020

■ Teachers of Color ■ White ■ No race reported



PELSB 2020 Tiered License and Permission Report

Minnesota ranks among the worst states in the nation for teacher diversity. While 35% of our students are students of color and Indigenous, only about 5% of our classroom teachers are. This statistic hasn't changed in two decades.

**The new tiered licensure system is working** and getting more people of color into teaching. According to Minnesota's Teacher Supply and Demand reports, licensure remains a barrier for current and prospective educators of color and prevents school administrators from hiring the best teachers possible.

**HF1376 would take us in the wrong direction** and would further shrink our teacher candidate pool. Policies that further restrict Tier 1 and Tier 2 educators will decrease the supply of educators from those licensure areas, making it unnecessarily difficult for these professionals to stay in the classroom for the students who need them the most.

Teacher Licensure Tiers by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Teachers on Tier 1, 2, & Special Permission	Total Active Teachers	% on Tier 1, 2, & Special Permission
White	5,990	69,603	9%
Black	354	1,296	27%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	51	342	15%
Asian or Pacific Islander	266	1,228	22%
Hispanic	276	864	32%
<b>Total Teachers of Color &amp; Indigenous Teachers</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>3,730</b>	<b>25%</b>

Source: Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board, 2019\*

\*EdAllies requested updated data from PELSB in August 2020 but has not received a response. Most special permissions would now be reflected as Tier 1 or Tier 2 licenses under the now fully implemented system.

### NO SINGLE PATHWAY CREATES EFFECTIVE EDUCATORS

Our current tiered licensure system acknowledges the many factors that can make an educator effective: their teaching experience, content knowledge, training and professional development, and, most importantly, impact on students. We know that great teachers come from many different backgrounds, and **we cannot double down on a restrictive, single path to the classroom** without compelling evidence to support it. Researchers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Columbia Business School, and Dartmouth College summarize it best in their report “What does certification tell us about teacher effectiveness?”

“We find little difference in the average academic achievement impacts of certified, uncertified, and alternatively certified teachers.”

### HOW MANY TEACHERS WOULD BE IMPACTED?

Minnesota’s 3,400 Tier 1 and Tier 2 teachers could be impacted by HF 1376. Many would be forced out of the profession for good, which could create staffing challenges for districts in a time of growing teacher shortages. Legislators should instead focus on supporting these educators to stay in the classroom and help them grow in the profession through mentorship and other strategies.

District	Tier 1 Teachers	Tier 2 Teachers	Total
Minneapolis Public Schools	21	146	167
St. Paul Public School District	30	95	129
Anoka-Hennepin Public School District	5	49	54
St. Cloud Public School District	24	29	53
Rochester Public School District	18	24	42
Intermediate School District 287	20	19	39
Osseo Public School District	3	34	37
Minnetonka Public School District	4	26	30
Spring Lake Park Public Schools	5	23	28
Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School District	1	23	24
Southwest Metro Intermediate 288	9	14	23
Intermediate School District 917	0	13	13

Source: PELSB 2019-20 assignment data.

## Proposed changes to Tiered Licensure

HF1376 would eliminate many of the licensure pathways teachers use.

### TIER 1

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educators must hold a bachelor’s degree, or if teaching in career and technical education, have one of the following: an associate’s degree, a professional credential, or five years of work experience in the content area.</li> <li>2. Educators must participate in district mentorship and induction programs, in teacher evaluations, and take content exams (unless teaching in career and technical education).</li> <li>3. School must affirm the candidate has the necessary skills and knowledge and must demonstrate that they were unable to hire a higher-tiered teacher.</li> </ol>
<b>TERMS &amp; RENEWALS</b>	<p>One-year license with up to three renewal, unless schools can present a further need <del>or if educator is a teacher shortage, a teacher of color, or a career and technical education teacher</del>. License is limited to the employing school district (cannot be transferred and not available to nonpublic schools).</p>

### TIER 2

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educators must hold a bachelor’s degree, or if teaching in career and technical education, have one of the following: an associate’s degree, a professional credential, or five years of work experience in the content area.</li> <li>2. Educators must be enrolled in a Minnesota teacher preparation program <u>or</u>; hold a master’s degree in the content area, <del>or fulfill at least two of the following:</del> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>○ have 8 upper division credits in content area;</del></li> <li><del>○ completed field-specific methods training;</del></li> <li><del>○ have two years of teaching experience in content area;</del></li> <li><del>○ receive passing scores on content and pedagogy exams;</del></li> <li><del>○ completed a state-approved teacher preparation program.</del></li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Educators must participate in district mentorship and induction programs, and in teacher evaluations.</li> </ol>
<b>TERMS &amp; RENEWALS</b>	<p>Two-year license with up to <del>three</del> <u>two</u> renewals. License is limited to the employing school district (cannot be transferred and not available to nonpublic schools).</p>

#### IMPACT OF HF1376 ON TIER 1

- X Removes automatic license renewal for teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas (Lines 17.11-17.14)
- ✓ Removes bachelor’s degree requirement for world language and art teachers.

#### IMPACT OF HF1376 ON TIER 2

- X Eliminates 10 of the 12 pathways to Tier 2 licensure, taking licenses away from current Tier 2 teachers who use these pathways. (Lines 19.2-19.14)
- X Reduces renewals from three to two, pushing educators out after 6 years—unless given an exemption by PELSB. (Line 20.4)

### TIER 3

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educators must hold a bachelor's degree, or if teaching in career and technical education, have one of the following: an associate's degree, a professional credential, or five years of work experience in the content area.</li> <li>2. <del>Educators must receive passing scores on content and pedagogy exams.</del></li> <li>3. Educators must participate in district mentorship and induction programs, and in teacher evaluations.</li> <li>4. Educators must fulfill at least one of the following:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o completed a Minnesota teacher preparation program;</li> <li>o completed a state-approved teacher preparation program with field-specific student teaching or at least two years of teaching experience;</li> <li>o submitted an application for licensure via portfolio;</li> <li>o hold an out-of-state license with at least two years of teaching experience; or</li> <li>o <del>completed three years teaching experience in Tier 2 with successful summative evaluations.</del></li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>TERMS &amp; RENEWALS</b>	Three-year license with unlimited renewability.

#### IMPACT OF HF1376 ON TIER 3

**X** Current law promises that Tier 2 teachers can be promoted to Tier 3 licensure with a good evaluation from their administrators. HF1376 would remove this pathway, pushing Tier 2 teachers out after 6 years.

The finish line is being moved; now, educators will have to go back to school or complete a lengthy portfolio process to continue working and their effectiveness will be removed from consideration. (Lines 22.7 – 22.10)

*\*Restriction also in Governor's bill*



Moves content and pedagogy assessment requirements to Tier 4

### TIER 4

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educators must hold a Tier 3 license.</li> <li>2. <del>Educators must receive passing scores on basic skills exam. Educators must receive passing scores on content and pedagogy exams.</del></li> <li>3. Educators must have three years of teaching experience in <u>content area from any state Minnesota.</u></li> <li>4. <del>Educators' most recent summative teacher evaluation cannot place them on an improvement plan.</del></li> <li>5. Educators must have completed a state-approved teacher preparation program.</li> </ol>
<b>TERMS &amp; RENEWALS</b>	Five-year license with unlimited renewability.

#### IMPACT OF HF1376 ON TIER 4

**X** Tier 4 master teachers would no longer need to show evidence of their effectiveness through a good evaluation. (Lines 23.17 – 23.19)



Removes the basic skills assessment requirement. (Lines 23.28 – 24.4)



Allows out-of-state teachers immediate access to licensure.

March 10th, 2021

Rep. Jim Davnie  
Chair MN House Committee on Education Finance  
Subject: HF 1376  
443 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Written Testimony Submission (HF 1376)**  
**Teach For America - Twin Cities**

I, Claire Jackson Stumbras, the Chief Program Officer of Teach For America Twin Cities, submit the following comments to be considered by the House Committee on Education Policy regarding HF 1376.

**Context on Teach For America**

Teach for America has been operating in Minnesota since 2009. Our mission is to ensure that all students have access to an excellent education. As an AmeriCorps program, our corps members start with a two year commitment to provide rigorous and excellent instruction as classroom educators. As program alum, corps members continue to have a lifetime commitment to advance education equity and advocate for youth.

To date, TFA Twin Cities has recruited, placed, and trained over 300 teachers in the Twin Cities. For the past three years, 30% - 45% of our first and second year teachers have been teachers of color. Also during this duration, our 3-year retention rate in education has been over 85%. For the past 7 years TFA Twin Cities has hosted an annual recruitment event to attract experienced teachers, administrators, principals, and school and system leaders to Minnesota. To date, we have engaged close to 200 teachers and leaders in the event. See below for a summary of the impact this event has had on the talent landscape in the twin cities.

- 25% - Average percent of participants identifying as people of color
- 32% - Percent of participants licensed in shortage area (Special Ed, English as a Second Language, STEM)
- 57% - Average percent of participants who accept a job offer and move to the Twin Cities within 6 months

Through these efforts and our program, there are now over 900+ TFA alumni in MN. Close to 70% of these still work in education with the vast majority working in the K-12 as classroom educators, support staff, and administrators. As an organization that has a long-standing and vested interest in the education landscape in MN, we look forward to submitting the recommendations below.

**Testimony Regarding HF 1376**

We would like to highlight some of the significant concerns we have regarding the changes to sections concerning tiered licensure. Specifically, lines 19.26-20.9 (regarding the removal of the coursework option to obtain a Tier 2

license) and lines 23.1-23.4 (regarding the removal of pathway from a Tier 2 license to to Tier 3 license via 3 years of satisfactory teaching).

Teacher diversity is a significant area of concern in the state of MN - where too many students of color do not have access to teachers and leaders who reflect their own identities. As a state, we must continue to advocate for and advance policy that will both diversify our teaching force and ensure each student has access to a high quality, effective teacher.

As written, this bill removes the coursework pathway that teacher applicants can use to pursue a Tier 2 license in the state. This is a critical pathway for out-of-state teachers, like many Teach For America alum, who have taught for at least two years to pursue a license in Minnesota. Teachers who have demonstrated both content knowledge and pedagogical learning, have been hired by a school district that is poised to support and develop them (and that has not been able to fill their vacancy with a Tier 3 or Tier 4 teacher), should be given the opportunity to teach.

In addition, the bill removes the pathway to move from a Tier 2 to a Tier 3 license by teaching 3 or more years on a Tier 2 license with a satisfactory performance review. We fear these changes would significantly reduce the ability of both in state and out of state candidates to enter the teaching profession and work toward a portable license in our state. These changes would significantly limit pathway options and we believe, in practice, would remove many effective and dedicated educators from the classroom.

The Tier 2 to Tier 3 pathway, that this bill would remove, provides a way for individuals who have demonstrated that they are effective educators to get permanent licenses. These teachers must first secure a Tier 2 license, satisfy requirements for the initial renewal of a Tier 2 license, and complete three years of teaching that demonstrates effectiveness through satisfactory evaluations. It has been three years since our state passed our tiered licensure system. There are high-quality Tier 2 teachers who are in their third year and, if this pathway is removed, they would not be allowed to receive the Tier 3 license they have been working towards and that would allow them to stay in the classroom.

Currently, 21% of individuals teaching on a Tier 2 license are teachers of color. Closing these pathways would remove a way for many of our state's teachers of color to get permanent licensure and would require many quality teachers in our state to navigate additional financial, time, and system barriers in order to secure a license. The current pathways allow for quality educators who are meeting the standards of their local leaders and boards to continue teaching on a Tier 2 license and eventually pursue a Tier 3 license without needing to overcome additional barriers. Additionally, these proposed changes would only further exacerbate challenges that districts and schools are experiencing with attracting and retaining qualified teachers ([PELSB MN Teacher Supply and Demand Report 2021](#)) at a time when we need qualified teachers to address COVID-19 related impact on student learning and academic achievement.

As the tiered licensure law currently stands, we believe that there are appropriate checks and balances in place to ensure that as a state we are able to first, ensure all teachers are qualified to be in front of students and second, ensure that we have multiple and expansive pathway options that allow us to fill classrooms with diverse and dedicated teachers. The proposed changes would result in a substantial shift in our licensure system. Before making such a substantial shift, we would expect to see clear and abundant evidence that our relatively new system is not operating as originally intended. Put plainly - we should not be adding additional barriers for dedicated teachers without clear evidence that these barriers will improve outcomes for students.

We thank the members of the committee for reviewing our comments and look forward to continuing conversations with representatives regarding the potential impacts of this bill.

Sincerely,

*Claire Jackson Stumbras*

**Claire Jackson Stumbras**

Chief Program Officer

Teach For America - Twin Cities

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<https://www.teachforamerica.org/twin-cities>

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

TEACHFORAMERICA



# PRODEO

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A C A D E M Y

Date of Hearing & Bill Number: March 16, 2021, HF 1376  
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee  
From: Mary Koslig, Director of Talent, Prodeo Academy  
City of Residence: Minneapolis, MN

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

Prodeo Academy opened in the fall of 2013. Our mission is to create schools where our students develop into critical thinkers and reflective leaders with strong character who contribute to their communities.

We have 11 teachers across our two schools teaching with a Tier 2 license, and 27% of them identify as Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color. Our retention rate for our BIPOC educators is over 85%. We work relentlessly to recruit and attract BIPOC teachers and staff because we know they have an important and often outsized impact on the academic performance of our students, the majority of whom also identify as Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color.

Too few BIPOC students have access to teachers and leaders who reflect their own identities. As a state, we have significant work to do to advocate for and advance policies that both diversify our teaching force and ensure each student has access to a high quality, effective teacher.

As written, HF 1376 will remove a pathway to licensure for Minnesota's effective Tier 2 teachers who are qualified to pursue a Tier 3 license. This pathway provides a way for individuals who have demonstrated that they are effective educators to obtain a permanent license. There are high-quality Tier 2 teachers, at our schools and across the state, who would not be allowed to receive a Tier 3 license they have been working towards if this pathway is removed.

Currently 21% of individuals teaching on a Tier 2 license identify as BIPOC. Closing this pathway would remove a way for many of our state's diverse teachers to achieve permanent licensure and would require many high-quality teachers in our state to navigate additional financial and systemic barriers in order to secure a license. This pathway currently in statute allows for high-quality educators who are meeting and exceeding the standards of their local principals and school boards to achieve a Tier 3 license without overcoming undue additional barriers. Additionally, this proposed change would further exacerbate challenges that our schools are experiencing with attracting and retaining diverse, qualified teachers, at a time when we desperately need qualified teachers to address COVID-19 related impacts on student learning and academic outcomes.

We strongly urge the committee to remove this section of HF 1376, and to keep our tiered licensure system intact, as originally written.

Sincerely,

Mary Koslig  
Director of Talent  
Prodeo Academy  
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[marykoslig@prodeoacademy.org](mailto:marykoslig@prodeoacademy.org)  
404-308-3033

## Written Testimony Regarding HF 1376

To Whom It May Concern:

I am reaching out to you regarding HF 1376 in Regards to Teaching License Provisions. The intent to change the number of times a Tier 2 teaching license can be renewed and changing the pathway to transition from Tier 2 to Tier 3 licensure is not only negatively impacting teachers but will also impact students. Many in areas where it is already difficult to fill teaching positions and find staff.

I am a Special Education Teacher, teaching on a Tier 2 license. I completed coursework as part of a teacher preparation program however did not “complete” the program due to the school shifting to a different licensure program and my own life changes. I have the foundations coursework and methods coursework. When I looked at transferring to another program, I was met with challenge and frustration. Either programs did not want to transfer my courses or they wanted me to go back and retake things from their program. MN does not have great options for adult friendly licensure programs. For this I am thankful for our alternative pathway to licensure. I come from years experience working with persons with disabilities and case management. I can honestly say that the best training I have ever received was working in the schools and teaching. I have learned more through mentorship programs, district training offerings and learning on the job than my preparation program. I have successfully worked in the classroom and passed my evaluations with high regards.

Putting a limit on or decreasing the number of renewals for the Tier 2 is really unneeded. Tier 2 teachers can easily work and apply with districts and receive support and mentoring. Cutting the pathway to transition from a tier 2 to tier 3 using three years teaching experience without being placed on an improvement plan as one of the options is a barrier that will force many teachers to reconsider their pathway or out of the field all together. This is an unnecessary challenge for those teachers who are already teaching and have the opportunity to move to Tier 3. Adding challenges to keeping and renewing teaching licenses is something that teachers absolutely do not need. To keep as many teachers as possible we need more support, smooth transitions and not more hurdles and hoops to jump through. I encourage you to work with, keep and encourage as many teachers as possible to stay in the classroom by not limiting Tier 2 renewals and not removing the years of teaching experience option as one of three requirements for a Tier 3 allowing for transition from Tier 2 to Tier 3. So much work has been put into developing the tiered licensure system, We need to give it a change to work.

Sincerely,  
Larissa Lambertz