

Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

We would like to clarify the impact of changes proposed in HF 699. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) oversees the state standards required to be a licensed teacher in Minnesota.

PELSB has concerns over the changes proposed in this bill. As currently written, HF 699 would not require an individual to obtain a substitute license (3-year short-call substitute license) from PELSB in order to substitute in Minnesota schools.

HF 699 requires a background check from the district that does not include an FBI fingerprint background check done when applying for a license through PELSB. Three years ago, the legislature removed the ability for an individual to work in a classroom pending completion of an FBI fingerprint background check over concerns of that individual would have access to students without knowing their whole criminal history. This bill would waive a fingerprint background check for thousands of short-call substitutes.

Additionally, PELSB has oversight over all teachers licensed in Minnesota, including the ability to discipline a teacher holding a license. This bill would remove all short-call substitutes from requiring a license and allow an individual to move from district to district with a wide variety of ethical concerns that do not reach the level of a criminal offense, but would seriously harm students (i.e. grooming behavior, racist remarks). PELSB currently sees individuals holding a substitute license come before our Discipline Committee and have taken action to suspend or revoke licenses based on their conduct. This bill would remove the ability for any agency to hold that individual accountable for ethical violations.

While we understand the desire to streamline districts' ability to place substitutes into the classroom, this should not come at the expense of student safety. We hope legislators will reach out to PELSB to discuss other options to address district needs.

Sincerely,



Alex Liuzzi

PELSB, Executive Director



Brian Rappe

PELSB, Chair