



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 17, 2011

Senator Gen Olson
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Capitol Building, Room 235
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Dear Senator Olson:

The alternative licensure bill you will consider today reflects compromise on all sides. However, it continues to fall short of quality assurances and neglects the importance of content knowledge for teacher efficacy at the secondary level. The simple fact is that teachers can't teach what they don't know.

Teaching in middle and high school is far different from what it was when we were in school, and is, in fact, far different from even a decade ago. Expectations for preparing students for success in college and career are far higher and more demanding. Teachers must thoroughly understand their content, and know how to differentiate that content for the unique and diverse needs of their students. Without deep knowledge of their subject matter, teachers begin at a disadvantage, and may be inadequately prepared to deliver on the promise of a quality educational experience for every child.

Alternatively licensed teachers are often placed in schools with the biggest challenges. It is imperative that if we have alternatively licensed candidates, we ensure they are fully prepared. Students have one opportunity each year to gain the knowledge they need to succeed at the next level. It is too great a risk to leave to chance their right to have a teacher, who is fully prepared to help them achieve at their highest potential during any of their critical school years, especially at the secondary level, where the graduation stakes are much higher.

Finally, it is regrettable that this bill does not better define a connection to higher education as a partnership. It is essential that non-profit start-ups partner with colleges of education to ensure the integrity of the licenses issued upon the completion of the programs and a consistent, reliable standard of preparedness among teacher candidates.

February 17, 2011
Senator Gen Olson
Page 2

We appreciate your prior efforts to negotiate in a manner in which all parties felt heard and valued, and in which students were placed first. We welcome further dialogue to resolve the issues presented here. We remain strongly committed to closing achievement gaps and providing the best teachers for our most vulnerable students. However, we should not compromise on the assurance that every Minnesota child is taught by a teacher of the highest quality. Thus, we respectfully urge you to consider these effects of the alternative pathway licensure program on the quality of teachers throughout Minnesota.

We want to resolve this matter expeditiously so we all can move on to the other urgent matters facing our students, teachers, and schools, such as, closing achievement gaps and making sure all children enter school ready to learn. There are 850,000 students; 68,000 teachers; and nearly 2000 schools, who are all counting on us to work together and who deserve our full and immediate attention to the more important issues, which will determine the quality of their educational opportunities.

Our best regards.

Sincerely,



Mark Dayton
Governor



Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Commissioner of Education

MD:kdk

cc: Senator Amy Koch, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Tom Bakk, Senate Minority Leader
Senator LeRoy Stumpf
Representative Kurt Zellers, Speaker of the House
Representative Paul Thissen, House Minority Leader
Representative Pat Garofalo