

Representative Genetski Testimony in favor of HB 4645

Thank you Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the House Education Committee - I appreciate the opportunity to speak on House Bill 4645 today. This is a bill to make newly certified k-12 teachers' lives a little easier and give them more time to devote to Michigan's kids through the very important classroom exercises of - preparing lessons, making contact with parents, and assessing student work to give quality feedback.

Currently, when a Michigan college student- who wants to be a teacher- graduates, he or she is saddled with an average of \$24,000 (and climbing) in debt. The recent grad will have recently paid close to \$50 for the required Basic Skills for Teacher Certification Test, \$75 required for each Subject Area Test, then an application fee for the Teaching Certificate at \$160, and shortly after graduation, the grad gets more bad news from the state.

The new grads are informed that their teaching certificate is only good for 5 years, and in order to keep their teaching certificate, they must PAY FOR and take at least 18 hours toward a master's degree to attain a "Professional Teaching Certificate" within five years or their current certificate is no longer valid. This is terrible policy for several reasons.

Reason 1- Studies are mixed at best as to whether or not more credit hours beyond a bachelor's or even holding a master's degree makes any difference on teacher effectiveness. Without hard, specific and defined data showing positive results that demanding more hours beyond the bachelor's will improve student growth, we have to question the wisdom of this mandate on our young teachers. For the committee's benefit, I put links to three articles below on the subject. There are many, many more articles like these, and the number of studies that have contradicted each other over the years on this topic is very high. Michelle Rhee who visited Lansing last year, stated that studies have found no correlation between advanced college degrees and student performance, so why pay more for a teacher with an advanced degree?

Reason 2- With the amount of debt our young teachers have already, do we want them contributing to the economy or jumping through more government hoops? One graduate credit hour at Michigan State University is currently \$569, and it's tough to find a ONE CREDIT class at the graduate level (http://www.ctr.msu.edu/COSTudentAccounts/Tuition_Fees.aspx). Throw in books, gasoline, course packets and other costs and that \$27,000 to \$32,000 a year that the starting teacher makes will not be going to buy houses, cars, and televisions but to graduate classes.

Reason 3- The first few years of teaching are the most challenging and difficult years of a teacher's career. The current requirements for teachers to earn 18 graduate hours within the first five years of them holding a certificate foolishly forces new teachers to spend more time jumping through government hoops and less time on lesson plans, assessing assignments to give quality feedback to students and making valuable parent contacts that can (studies are not mixed on the benefits of parent contacts) drive more effective learning. Good habits for each of these tasks should be established and reinforced during the first few years of teaching. Cumbersome state

requirements that take teachers away from these tasks ill-affect the new teacher's ability to hone in and craft the routines that can create an effective teacher as a career for a lifetime.

Reason 4- I am not sure if anyone has noticed, but our state recently endured a very challenging economic downturn. In fact, from 2007 to 2010, 34,771 new teachers earned certification in Michigan. Over that time period, the K-12 student population decreased by 3 percent. In short, very few people were hiring teachers during this time period and in fact, some teachers got laid off. So, of those 34,771 newly certified teachers, many did not get jobs, yet they earned and paid for their "provisional certificate". And while they lack a teaching job to help them pay for the \$569 per credit hour class, the state's clock is ticking on new graduates to take classes before their current license to teach from the state expires.

House Bill 4645 eliminates the requirement that teachers enroll in a graduate program and pursue the 18 hours in order to keep their state license current. The bill in fact eliminates the "Professional Teaching Certificate" and the requirements the state put in place for the 2nd license.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I strongly encourage you to consider those new teachers who the state has bullied and burdened with cumbersome regulations that neither make their jobs easier nor are proven to help effectiveness. Some of those teachers are young - 22 years old, knee deep in debt and hoping to start a family or maybe buy a home, but the current requirement make those dreams very difficult to reach. If the committee will not consider relieving this needless burden on young teachers, I strongly encourage us to work together to pass a law forcing new lawmakers to earn 18 graduate credit hours (in an approved master's program) before they can sit for a third term. In passing this, my guess is we would not have more effective lawmakers, but we would have tired and frustrated ones who could relate better to new teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on HB 4645. I hope we can work together on improving education for all of Michigan's students.

<http://educationnext.org/the-education-school-masters-degree-factory/>

<http://www.educationreport.org/9592>

http://teachingquality.typepad.com/building_the_profession/2009/05/how-teacher-education-and-masters-degrees-make-a-difference-for-student-achievement.html