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Opponent Testimony

SB 66 - AN ACT concerning education; relating to teacher licensure; enacting the interstate teacher mobility compact; recognizing equivalent teacher licenses from other member states.

Presented to the House Committee on Education

Monday, March 6, 2023

by

Ann Mah and Dr. Deena Horst, Legislative Liaisons

Kansas State Board of Education

Chairman Thomas and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing us to weigh in on SB 66, enacting the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact and making Kansas a member state of the Compact. The Kansas State Board of Education ("State Board") opposes this bill at this time. The State Board is actively engaged in finding the best solutions for Kansas, and we ask that you not hamstring those efforts with legislation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the problems public schools face and the stress under which teachers operate. Retirements and resignations of teachers and administrators rose. In response, states lowered teacher licensure standards to fill shortages. States started lowering or removing academic requirements for teacher preparation.

Advocates of the Compact may wish to assure everyone that Kansas would not need to lower its standards, but the State Board is not yet convinced that is true. Advocates of the Compact fail to point out that while many states will require legislation to change their licensing reciprocity rules, Kansas does not. Due to our self-executing authority to adopt rules and regulations pertaining to teacher licensure, the State Board can accomplish nearly every goal of the Compact without legally binding Kansas to the Compact Commission's yet-to-be-determined rules and without passing legislation. In fact, the Kansas Constitution and the Kansas Supreme Court have given the State Board responsibility over teacher licensure. They

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have given funding responsibility to the Legislature. If the State Board decides that the best path forward is to join the Compact, we will gladly accept a partnership to make that happen.

The State Board heard a full presentation on the Compact at its December meeting and participated in a review and discussion of it at its January meeting. When the time came for the State Board to vote on the issue in January, members were not ready to make a determination. We continue to meet with our staff and attorneys to get our questions answered, and we expect the State Board to continue its deliberations soon.

The State Board is addressing the teacher shortage problem on several fronts. We are actively working to remove the unnecessary barriers to getting more teachers into the classroom, and those efforts include reviewing our rules and regulations pertaining to reciprocity, testing, documentation, and more.

A Blue Ribbon Task Force on teacher recruitment and retention made recommendations for local and state solutions, and the State Board continues to look for new ideas through its Teacher Vacancy and Supply Committee. Over the last few years, we have opened several new pathways to teaching, including limited apprenticeships for high incidence special education and elementary education, and Wichita State University's Teacher Apprentice Program. Other efforts include the potential creation of a Legacy License for retired educators.

The State Board is not opposed to multi-state agreements when we believe it is in the best interest of children. Kansas is involved in the NASDTEC Interstate agreement for Education Licensure and the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Neither of those agreements put students at risk of being taught by less-qualified teachers.

The State Board continues to explore the aspects of the Compact that would benefit Kansas students. That is our constitutional obligation, duty, and responsibility. We ask that the Legislature allow us to continue to work on the best licensure options for Kansas without intrusion.

We welcome the Legislature's partnership in growing a quality teaching force. There are many ways to do that, including increasing teacher pay, showing teachers more respect, and exploring the recent recommendations identified by the Kansas Board of Regents Educator Work Force Task Force. We will continue to search out ways to solve the problems public schools face together.

Thank you for allowing us to provide input on this important issue.