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OPPONENT IN-PERSON TESTIMONY ON SB 407
Senate Education Committee
Thursday, February 8, 2024
Dr. Deena Horst & Ann Mah, Liaisons
Kansas State Board of Education

Chairwoman Senator Baumgardner and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 407. Our opposition is related to our belief that SB 407 is unnecessary and in derogation of the constitutional authority granted the Kansas State Board of Education (State Board).

In the past few years, the State Board has approved several alternative pathways to becoming a licensed teacher in Kansas. Last year, this Legislature supported these efforts by passing legislation to join the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact. Last year's legislation upheld the requirement that to receive a Kansas teaching license from an out-of-state program, that program must first be approved by the state from which the Applicant is seeking reciprocity. SB407 removes that requirement and erases almost all oversight. If SB 407 becomes law, the State Board will be forced to issue a professional credential to anyone who can pass a couple of tests – even if they never receive any training in how to be an effective, professional teacher. For example, this Legislature and the State Board both recognize the need to include structured literacy training for pre-service elementary school teachers. SB 407 prevents the State Board from requiring such training before issuing a teaching license.

This is not an issue of addressing shortages of qualified teachers. To that end the State Board already issues licenses to individuals who complete an alternative program and meet the following requirements: 1) Hold a bachelor's degree; 2) Hold a valid out-of-state license; 3) Successfully complete a background check; and 4) Submit an application and fee.



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The State Board is constitutionally responsible for licensing teachers. We take very seriously our responsibility to ensure that individuals who receive a Kansas teaching license meet Kansans' expectations that teachers be of the highest quality and are well-versed in the subjects they teach. To ensure that educator preparation programs are positioned to produce teachers who are well-prepared, these programs are subject to accreditation by the State Board. Other states often do not have an elected State Board of Education that has self-executing powers, so the legislature must make such decisions. Kansas does have such a body, the Kansas State Board of Education, which is constitutionally required to make such licensure decisions. To ensure the teacher quality expected by Kansans is preserved, Alternative Preparation Providers must be approved by the State Board so unintended consequences do not occur in the future. To do otherwise will likely reap such unintended consequences, including teacher education that is not commensurate with the expectations of Kansans.

As previously said, SB 407 is unnecessary and in derogation of the constitutional authority of the Kansas State Board of Education. In the future, please direct any entity requesting to offer teacher education programs in Kansas to the State Board of Education. We believe it is a dangerous precedent to write a bill so that one provider can do an end run around the State Board to do business here.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.