



An Open Letter to Minnesota Legislators

3/1/2023

Dear Legislator:

Soon you will be asked to vote to end the largest pathway for teachers of color to enter the classroom in Minnesota.

We are referring to specific sections in HF1224/SF1477. As a concerned group of educators, we are writing to oppose ending the Tier 2 to Tier 3 licensure pathway for experienced teachers who entered the profession through doors that had been previously closed to them.

As you know, this pathway was created by the legislature in 2017 after a bipartisan effort to fix our broken teacher licensure system in Minnesota. Sadly, this provision has been attacked every single year in the five years since it became effective. This pathway has done so much to increase teacher diversity in Minnesota. Eliminating it would be a step in the wrong direction when we could be working together to make elements like the portfolio process more accessible. **Why rush to dismantle the system before we've had an opportunity to see the full impact on student experience and achievement?**

PELSB Interim Executive Director Dr. Yelena Bailey recently shared that approximately 99 teachers have earned their Tier 3 license using this pathway, 17 of whom were teachers of color. That number may not sound like much progress, but the three-years of experience for the pathway was only met last summer. **We hope you agree that 99 teachers moving from a provisional Tier 2 license to a Tier 3 license in one year is a strong start for a new program.**

We are aware that an amendment to the original bill would allow current teachers pursuing this pathway to complete the process. That does not eliminate the bigger problem: the fact that the pathway will not exist for future professionals who find the traditional licensure pathway or the portfolio out of reach.

When deciding how to vote on this bill, please consider the following: **do you wish to support increasing teacher diversity and reducing the teacher shortage? Or, do you wish to protect the wealth of institutions that benefit from all teacher candidates being forced to attend traditional preparation programs regardless of their professional experience or personal situation?**

We ask that you vote your conscience and not fall prey to political pressure. Listen instead to the school governance leaders, advocates, and the community members who have reached out to you in opposition of ending this pathway within HF1224/SF1477.

In partnership,

Members of Educators for Excellence Minnesota

Tameika Williams, 11th-12th Grade, Education Pathway Coordinator

Annie Erickson, Instructional Coach

Patricia Cuevas, Kindergarten Teacher

Mina Lein, Special Education (DCD) Teacher

Derek Davidson, 9th Grade Composition Teacher

Nicole Cooley, High School Principal

Jabari Bowne, ASD Teacher

Adewale Philip Adenodi, 10-12th Grade Social Studies Teacher

Steven Montgomery, 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher

Alexis Mann, EBD/SLD Teacher

Richard Terrell, Assistant Principal

Alex Leonard, 9-12th Grade Counselor

Katie Sandsmark, 9-12th EL Teacher

Ellen Vanden Branden, Dean of Instruction

Natalee D'Amore, 9-12th Grade Counselor

Amy Cooper, Speech Language Pathologist

Thressa Johnson, High Five Teacher (Pre-K)

Veronica Castellanos-Vasquez, Kindergarten Teacher

Kelly Chesnik, 3rd Grade Teacher

Jenifer Shier, Library Media Specialist

Susan Providence, 3rd Grade Teacher & Math Specialist