

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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Senator Cwudzinski and members of the Senate Education Policy Committee,

We are writing to express our support for SF 3567, specifically the modifications proposed to the tiered licensure system for Special Education teachers. These changes are vital to addressing the compliance issues outlined by the US Office of Special Education Programs.

In Minnesota, we have a diverse array of higher education and alternative providers offering many routes for teachers to attain a Tier 3 license. It is important to note that federal law explicitly prohibits the waiver of special education licensure requirements on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis.

The key provisions of SF 3567 that bring our state licensure rules for Tier 1 and Tier 2 into compliance include:

- **Quality Professional Development:** Applicants must receive quality professional development, ensuring that they are well-equipped to meet the unique needs of special education students.
- **Supervision and Ongoing Support:** The bill emphasizes the importance of supervision and ongoing support for applicants, recognizing the challenges faced by special education teachers.
- **Progress Toward Professional Licensure:** Applicants are required to demonstrate progress toward professional licensure.
- **Tier 1 Limitation:** Tier 1 applicants are subject to a three-year limit, fostering a sense of urgency and accountability in meeting the necessary licensure requirements.

Having standards for teacher licensure is not intended to create arbitrary barriers. We believe in preparing and supporting educators so they have the skills needed to meet their students' diverse needs. **The students of Minnesota deserve trained and supported teachers.** Furthermore, it's crucial to highlight the potential risk our state faces concerning the loss of over **\$200 million in annual federal funding** for special education programs if our licensure rules are not corrected and improved. The attached infographic illustrates the link between our state licensure laws and federal funding.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and we urge your continued support for SF 3567.

Sincerely,

Laura Mogelson, Legislative Liaison
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MEMBERS: Augsburg University • Bemidji State University • Bethany Lutheran College • Bethel University • Capella University • College Of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University • College Of Saint Scholastica • Concordia College • Concordia University • Crown College • Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College • Gustavus Adolphus College • Hamline University • Martin Luther College • Metropolitan State University • Minnesota State University, Mankato • Minnesota State University-Moorhead • North Central University • Southwest Minnesota State University • St. Catherine University • St. Cloud State University • St. Mary's University Of Minnesota • St. Olaf College • University Of Minnesota Crookston • University Of Minnesota Duluth • University Of Minnesota Morris • University Of Minnesota Twin Cities • University Of Northwestern – St. Paul • University Of St. Thomas • Walden University • Winona State University

LINKS BETWEEN LICENSURE AND IDEA FUNDING

Did you know IDEA funding can be taken away?

DO YOU KNOW THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN TEACHER LICENSURE AND IDEA FUNDING?

IDEA section 612(a)(14)(C), as amended by ESSA, eliminates the definition of “highly qualified” but still specifies Federal requirements for the employment of special education teachers.

- Fully Certified means completing accredited teacher preparation program OR pass all state special education licensing exam requirements



IDEA ALSO PROVIDES GUIDELINES FOR THOSE TEACHING ON AN EMERGENCY LICENSE.



- Hold at least a Bachelor's degree
- Be enrolled in an accredited preparation program within 1 year being hired and assuming the role (Move from a Tier 1 to Tier 2)
- Participate in intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support or teacher mentoring
- Complete process for full certification within 3 years (Tier 2 license not to exceed 3 years)

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR MINNESOTA?

According to MDE, Minnesota receives approximately \$207 million for Part B and an additional \$8 million for Part C programming. If legislation is passed allowing Tier 2 License to Tier 3 without completing an accredited program it could jeopardize Federal dollars.

- There are approximately 10,000 active SPED teacher licenses; 1/3 are less than fully prepared:
 - approximately 1500 on Tier 1 (some since 2018)
 - approximately 2000 on Tier 2 (some since 2017)



WHAT DOES A FULLY CERTIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHING WORKFORCE MEAN FOR THE FUTURE?



- Fully Certified teachers lead to greater student achievement. Meaning students leave school ready for higher levels of independence and a decreased financial burden on the state.
- Fully Certified special education teachers are prepared to help school administrators. Resulting in fewer BOSA complaints (over 90% of BOSA complaints were related to special education). Reducing the legal expenses districts face for Due Process violations.