

I am writing regarding **HF2497, Lines: 173.13, 177.13, 218.23**. I urge you to not remove the following condition of 3 years experience as a possible way to demonstrate competency for a Tier 3 Teaching License.

Providing this pathway to a Tier 3 License will grow and protect:

1. Teachers of Color
2. Teacher with diverse experiences and backgrounds.

First, let's consider protecting our teachers of color. Why is this important? It is because our state is becoming more diversified racially and culturally, and **studies indicate** (such as a study done by the Harvard Kennedy School) **that when teacher and student demographics mirror each other there is increased academic success for ALL races and ethnicities**, and in particular for students who have historically underperformed.

I looked at the racial demographics for one of the public high schools in our state's capital and found that the percentage of White students is 5.2%, and their Students of Color and Indigenous Students are at 94.8%. While teacher demographic per school is not reported, we do know that 78.27% (almost 80%!) of teachers who hold a license are White.

**"But...I don't get it! If a teacher is White that doesn't mean they can't be a good teacher!"** That is true, and this goes beyond that. What race are YOU? When you sit down to watch a TV show, turn on a movie or curl up with a good book – what is the demographic of the people and characters in your entertainment of choice? Does their race mostly reflect your race? Beyond the color of our skin, we select and gravitate toward situations that reflect us, because we can understand their norms, routines, and beliefs, their lived experiences, and we identify with them. Likewise, teachers with a like background will naturally select examples, stories, and pictures that reflect the experiences and understandings of student with shared experiences, and expand the understanding of students who differ from them.

I didn't understand how important this was until about a year ago, when I was talking to a Hmong student. I was asking her **if she had a favorite teacher**. She told me without hesitation that it was her 2nd grade teacher. "And why is that?", I asked. Her answer – without hesitation? **"Because she was my first Hmong teacher!" This from a third grade student - unprompted.** Having a teacher that our students identify with, have commonality with and feel at "home" with will ingratiate them to their education in way that can't happen without a shared bond or experience.

**25% (1 out of every 4) Indigenous teachers or teachers of color are on a Tier 1, Tier 2 or special license.** We cannot afford to lose these teachers.

Tier 2 license with a pathway to becoming a Tier 3 license by receiving favorable summative evaluations for three years, means that we can also grow the depth of knowledge and diversity of our teaching staff. I have a friend who is considering a career as a K-12 educator after years in corporate roles, including managing and directing teams both locally and internationally. I also met a teacher who is teaching his native language of Chinese after a successful medical career. Both these people bring a wealth of knowledge and skill to the classroom, and having a pathway to receiving a Tier 3 license, which allows them tenure and stability, means they can seriously consider teaching as a career for years to come - and not something to "give up" and "move on from" after 4 or 6 years.

**Then, why don't these Tier 2 educators just go back to school and complete a Minnesota-approved teacher preparation program?** There can be obstacles to completing

another program. First, it takes additional time and money. Teachers put in hours beyond the eight hours they are paid a day, and are currently working frantically to try to ensure all their students are meeting their academic standards – something that is increasingly hard to do coming off of Covid. Taking additional credits may not move them up the pay scale since these are bachelor credits and not masters credits. Master credits are also more expensive. Teachers could also have small children, be single parents, taking care of parents or family members, working a second job, or coaching - meaning there may not be the extra time or money to sit down and take a class.

***And... Tier 2 educators are arguably receiving a better education by being in the classroom, than by taking classes as part of a teacher preparation program!*** Per state statutes 122A.40 EMPLOYMENT; CONTRACTS; TERMINATION, and 122A.41 TEACHER TENURE ACT; CITIES OF THE FIRST CLASS; DEFINITIONS, teachers are required to be evaluated three times a year for the first three years by their PELS certified principal. The principal has an insight into the performance of the teacher via access to student data and progress, observing classroom lessons formally and informally (as when they stop in for a short chat or to support behavior), and observing their collaborations and interactions with their colleagues and parents. Summative evaluations are a way in which detailed feedback is given and allows the teacher to reflect and implement feedback and their own ideas for progressing the classroom. Additionally, these statutes detail that teachers need to be part of a job-embedded professional learning community (PLCs). PLCs meet regularly, often once a week, to review student data, talk about approaches to teaching, and how to support students that are struggling or working beyond the standards of the class. PLCs work researched approaches and include evidence-based practices for the betterment of their classes. Being engaged in this work and directly applying learning to a classroom and seeing its effects, is an education on par, minimally, with taking a class on education.

I am an educator who is in my third career. I could make more money elsewhere with far less stress. When I worked in the corporate environment, I easily left my work behind at the office when I left. It's a different feeling in the school where leaving your work behind is a lot harder and takes more discipline. AND I believe in public education. I believe in giving our students the BEST that we have. I also see who we can learn SO much these days, and it doesn't need to be in a classroom. I think we need to trust the people that we have in place (both teachers and the licensed principals who oversee them) to provide the best education for our future.

Sincerely,

Amy Cooper  
Speech-Language Pathologist, Saint Paul Public Schools