February 26, 2021

Representative Ruth Richardson
Education Policy Committee, Chair
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

To: Chair Richardson and members of the committee
Re: HF 1376

A fair and objective teacher preparation and licensure framework is critical to building a thriving teacher pipeline and to ensure all students have access to effective and great teachers. HF 1376 would reverse years of work to reform Minnesota's broken teacher licensure system, and would be detrimental to Minnesota students who can't afford to lose teachers from diverse backgrounds. I entered Minnesota as an out of state teacher and am a teacher of color. I was able to get a Tier 3 license through the current system, and it was already very challenging despite having a full professional license and many years of experience and positive evaluations in my previous jobs. If I faced additional barriers and a system that required even more time and money to be able to gain a license, I would have left the profession. We should be supporting and developing promising educators, not putting up barriers and pushing them out.

While the bill proposes some positive changes—for example, creating Bachelor's Degree exemptions and unlimited Tier 2 renewals for CTE teachers—this sweeping bill does much more harm than good. It would close pathways into the teaching profession, reduce teacher retention (especially for educators of color and other shortage areas), and harm our state's efforts to further diversify the workforce.

1. **The bill would eliminate pathways to Tier 2 licensure.** The proposed changes would remove multiple pathways to the classroom by no longer allowing candidates to qualify for a Tier 2 license based on completing a menu of requirements. For example: say you are a current teacher who passed all of your Minnesota tests and have two years of teaching experience in another state. Currently, you'd be given a Tier 2 license because you've been able to demonstrate content and pedagogy through assessments and show that you have teaching experience in the field. This bill would strip you of your Tier 2 eligibility because it no longer considers experience or evidence of content and pedagogy. There is no evidence that this policy change will benefit students—but rather, it would push out the educators our students need, increase shortages, and make it more difficult for schools to hire and retain the best possible candidates.

2. **The bill removes the pathway to Tier 3 licensure based on teaching experience and a good evaluation.** By eliminating this pathway to permanent licensure, Minnesota will push out high-quality teachers who bring a host of experiences and skills, along with evidence of classroom success, and oftentimes other degrees and credentials. This would undermine Minnesota students by removing successful teachers from the classroom and increasing barriers to pathways used disproportionately by teachers of color. The latest data shows that at least 21% of teachers who hold a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license are teachers of color—this is significant since, overall, teachers of color make up just 5.6% of Minnesota's teaching force. Removing this pathway would push dedicated teachers out of the profession.

3. **The bill would push Tier 1 teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas out of the classroom regardless of whether students and their schools need them**. The bill would

eliminate language ensuring unlimited renewals for Tier 1 educators teaching in a shortage area, which includes teachers of color. Current law helps keep educators of color and other teachers in shortage areas in the profession, giving them, their schools, and most importantly their students, consistency and reliability. The law was written so that teachers in shortage areas and teachers of color can stay in the classroom and not be pushed out after some arbitrary cap on their tenure. This proposal would simply take us back to a time when teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas are little more than short-term variances that can be, and often were pulled at any time.

4. **The bill would remove a clear timeline for Tier 1 and Tier 2 renewals resulting in hiring uncertainty**. We are concerned with the removal of the language that PELSB must approve or deny a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license within 30 days. This eliminates a clear approval timeline for when a school and teacher applicant can expect to receive their license. Before the required 30-day timeline, educators and schools would sometimes never receive a response, or they would receive a decision late sometimes even after the school year. Before the tiered licensure law, schools would sometimes have unlicensed teachers in the classroom simply because the Board of Teaching hadn't determined one way or the other whether a license was approved.

5. **This bill would remove measures of quality that differentiate Tiers 3 and 4.** While PELSB proposes these changes that would negatively impact Tier 1 and Tier 2 licensed teachers, we are also concerned with removing evidence of effectiveness for Tier 4 educators. A Tier 4 license should be the highest license, signifying mastery of the profession. Currently, teachers can only get a Tier 4 license after receiving a positive evaluation on Tier 3. PELSB proposes removing this requirement, requiring only time in the classroom to move up. This calls into question the purpose of a Tier 4 license.

In a time when we should be creating more pathways for diverse, high-quality and non-traditional individuals to enter the profession, this bill contains numerous provisions that would erect barriers and push effective educators out of the profession. In a time when we are having deep conversations about racial equity, we must take seriously the fact that these proposals would disproportionately harm teachers of color, who make up 21% of educators on Tiers 1 and 2. We should shift our thinking to research-backed approaches and center our thinking not on what we've always done but how we can improve the lives of students who have been underserved and undervalued for far too long.

 Sincerely,

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