

February 11, 2009

Dear Chairman Bacon and members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing to comment on the "Alternative Teachers P-20 Council" bill. I am Co-Chair of the Colorado Council of Deans of Education and Dean of the College of Education at the University of Northern Colorado. Specific to this bill, I chair the Educator Subcommittee of the Governor's P-20 Council.

The Educator Subcommittee developed recommendations concerning teacher quality and licensure after meeting with many stakeholders: representatives of the Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education, representatives of university and alternative teacher preparation programs, school district human resources personnel, new teachers, and representatives for several relevant national bodies.

In my opinion, the bill is certainly in line with the recommendations of Educator Subcommittee. Ensuring consistency and high quality in the preparation of teachers in our schools was an important topic of discussion for the subcommittee. Standardizing terminology of alternative routes to teaching will assist in providing an understanding of how teachers are prepared. Additionally, I strongly endorse the requirement that alternative routes to teaching receive 5-year evaluations.

I recently attended a conference on teacher preparation in which the research on teacher quality was reviewed. Thanks to more sophisticated work, a growing body of research is demonstrating that strong initial training results in better qualified teachers and lower teacher attrition. The qualities associated with strong initial training include: advanced student teaching experiences provided by a good mentor; in-depth content knowledge; and education courses taught in conjunction with teaching experiences.

Thank you for considering this input.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Eugene P. Sheehan
Dean