

MAY 23 1997

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Senate of Pennsylvania

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May 22, 1997

The Honorable James Rhoades, Chairman
Senate Education Committee
Room 350 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Jim:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on IRRC Regulation #6-258, Title 22-Chapter 49, Certification of Professional Personnel. I would like to present my comments in concert with Senate Bill 706, legislation which I have re-introduced this legislative session to require continuing certification for education professionals.

As you know, under the current system of certification for education professionals, once an employee becomes permanently certified, there is no requirement to continue on with educational studies. While there are many dedicated and excellent education professionals who automatically pursue continuing education, there are some who, once they become permanently certified, do nothing to continue their studies. Probably in no other profession is it more important to keep current in academic disciplines; for these are the individuals who are teaching our youth and challenging them daily to prepare for a world where information changes at lightning speed.

Item 1: Requirements for continuing education:

Chapter 49 changes require continuing certification every five years including completing any of the following or a combination thereof: 6 college credits in the areas of assignment and certification; 6 credits of Department-approved in-service courses in the areas of assignment and certification; or 180 hours of Department-approved professional development activities and experiences which may include curriculum work and professional conferences and workshops. Senate Bill 706 provides for more rigorous requirements. While the above requirements would apply to those who have completed a Master's degree, individuals who *do not* have a Master's degree, under my legislation,

would need to complete any of the following or a combination thereof: 9 college credits in the areas of assignment and certification; 9 credits of Department-approved in service courses in the areas of assignment and certification; and 250 clock hours of Department-approved continuing professional development experiences in the areas of assignment and certification which may include curriculum development work, program design and delivery and professional seminars and workshops.

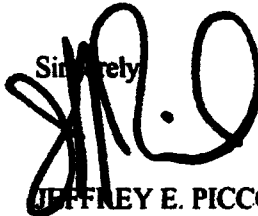
Retroactivity:

Chapter 49 regulations would apply only to those currently in professional preparation programs and all future prospective education professionals. Senate Bill 709 includes all current and new education professionals. I believe it is imperative that everyone in the current public school system engage in continuing professional development so that all students may share in the benefits of such a system.

Fiscal impact on professional personnel:

Chapter 49 does not address how requirements for continuing professional development would financially impact on personnel. Senate Bill 709 provides that if the continuing professional development activity is to be used for renewable certification and is paid for by the individual, school board approval is not required. However, if the district is paying for the activity, school board approval is required. This also allows for more oversight and control at the local level in terms of what types of continuing professional development activities are being pursued.

In closing, as we continue to raise the bench marks of achievement for student academic standards, we must also ensure that our educators continually strive to set their standards higher and higher as well. I believe the rigorous standards in my legislation, as well as the requirement for all professionals to comply with them, will be a significant first step in achieving that goal.

Sincerely,

JEFFREY E. PICCOLA

JEP/nj