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Senate of Pennsylvania

July 7, 2000

COMMITTEES

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2000 JUL 11 AM 8:59
REVIEW COMMISSION

John R. McGinley, Jr., Esquire,
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Chairman McGinley:

The Department of Education, Final-Form Standard #6-264: Amendments to 22 PA Code, Chapter 354 *Standards and Procedures for Institutional Preparation of Professional Educators*, will be up for review and action at your July 13, 2000 meeting.

As you may know the Senate Education Committee, of which I am a member, voted against the measure 9-2. I would like to clarify and convey my position regarding this matter to you and your colleagues at the I.R.R.C.

Having had the chance to thoroughly review the proposed regulation and ask questions about certain aspects of it I believe that the final-form regulation contains strong and effective criteria for the preparation of prospective teachers. My initial concern, like many of the other Education Committee members, was the mandatory entrance requirements to enter state teacher preparatory programs. While the essential entrance G.P.A. of 3.0 is ambitious it will not act as an obstacle to students who have the desire to become teachers.

Several reasonable alternatives exist to allow those who do not meet the G.P.A. entrance requirement to be admitted into teacher preparatory programs. These alternatives include:

- a score on the S.A.T. of at least 1050 overall with no less than 500 for the mathematics and verbal subtests respectively, a score on the A.C.T. of no less than 23 on the English subtest and 20 on the mathematics subtest, or advanced qualifying scores as determined by the Secretary and approved by the Board on the Pre-Professional Skills Tests;
- allowing each preparatory institution to accept up to 10% of the applicants to its professional education program who do not meet the overall G.P.A. requirement or the alternative admission criteria; and
- allowing a preparatory institution, when the institutional pass rate on the professional knowledge and subject assessments is 90 percent or higher for a given testing year, to reduce the 3.0 G.P.A. requirement to a G.P.A. entry requirement determined by the preparing institution and approved by the Department of Education.

Further, colleges and universities are free to set individual policies regarding changes in grades, making up incomplete work and retaking courses for students who have experienced hardship. I am satisfied that no student who wants to become a prospective teacher who is reasonably qualified would be unable to do so at one of the Commonwealth's accredited teacher preparatory programs.

There are roughly 90 teacher preparatory programs in the state. Pennsylvania turns out about 5,500 certified teachers per year from these programs. However, only 800 to 900 of these teachers are hired within the Commonwealth with the result that Pennsylvania is one of the leading exporters of qualified teachers in the country. Therefore, I believe it may be an opportune time to raise the standards for the preparation of professional educators in the Commonwealth. At present there seems to be no shortage of qualified teachers to serve in Pennsylvania schools.

As a result I urge you to take favorable action on this regulation. I also request that as you take action on this regulation you do so with the understanding that it will help improve educational quality in Pennsylvania for years to come. This regulation complements and is consistent with other steps the General Assembly has taken to improve the quality of education in Pennsylvania.

Thank you for considering these comments as you prepare to take action on final-form standard #6-264. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or desire any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

TIMOTHY F. MURPHY
State Senator
37th Senatorial District

TFM/jjs

Cc: I.R.R.C. Commissioners
Secretary Eugene Hickok
Senator James Rhoades
Ms. Kathleen Eakin