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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Chairman Education Committee
Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

Caucuses

PA Higher Education Assistance Agency, Member
Board of Directors

PA Historical And Museum Commission
Black History Advisory Committee, Member

April 25, 2007

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

RE: Proposed Regulation #006-303(Chapter 49-2 - Certification of Professional Personnel)

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

Pursuant to Section 5 of Act 181 of 1982, known as the Regulatory Review Act, the House Education Committee held a hearing on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, to review proposed regulation #006-303, State Board of Education, 22 PA Code, Chapter 49-2: Certification of Professional Personnel. At this time, the Committee has several concerns and thus offers the following comments, which were prepared by the Committee's bipartisan staff:

1) Requirements related to instructional certificates issued on or after January 1, 2012:

- **Less flexibility to staff elementary schools**
- **Split of elementary certificates puts Pennsylvania education graduates at a distinct disadvantage with those from other states; discourage teacher candidates from enrolling in Pennsylvania teacher preparation programs and makes Pennsylvania graduates less employable in other states. Every state on the eastern seaboard (except Georgia) has a K-6 certificate along with early childhood and Middle School certificates. Reportedly, Texas is reversing itself and plans to move from its more restrictive certification levels similar to those included in the proposed Chapter 49-2 revisions to a larger span elementary education certification as currently exists within Pennsylvania.**
- **Force graduating teachers to obtain dual certification (K-3 and 4-8) in order to be appropriately prepared to teach children in their future classes.**
- **Require future teachers to choose a certificate before they have the opportunity to experience the realities of teaching in range of age groups.**

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- 3) Concerns that the Board will only grant exceptions to the program requirements for a teacher education program "that apply Statewide" shortages of certified personnel as opposed to also allowing for local shortages of certified personnel. Concerns were also expressed about what criteria will be used by the department in granting these exceptions, how will exceptions be granted for immediate or short-term vacancies as well as whether these exceptions (emergency certificates) are allowable under the No Child Left Behind Act or will such a designation deem an affected teacher as not highly qualified under the Acts' provisions.

4) Flexibility in Additional 12 Credits (360 hours)

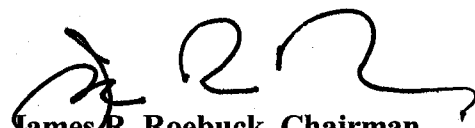
Given the concerns about the ability of teacher education programs to fit the additional 9 credits or 270 hours of diverse learner courses and 3 credits or 90 hours for English language learners into their existing program, consideration should be given by the Board to spread out this requirement over both the Instructional I and Instructional II certification timeframe. For example, require 6 credits or 180 hours of diverse learner courses for Instructional I certification and require 3 more credits or 90 hours of diverse learner courses as well as 3 credits or 90 hours for English language learners for Instructional II certificates. There are other variations that should be considered as well.

Additionally, this greater flexibility in this requirement should be accompanied by the Department offering free courses on diverse learners and English language learners to teachers seeking Instructional II certification and continuing education credits under the Chapter 48 requirements.

It has been further suggested that rather than requiring dual certifications, consideration should be given to offering "concentrations" to already certificated teachers based upon completion of a set number of hours or credits of continuing professional development.

The committee and its staff greatly appreciate many of the other issues addressed by the Board and the effort which went into the proposed changes. We compliment the Board members and its staff for their hard work and look forward to working with them in their effort to improve Chapter 49-2.

Sincerely,



James R. Roebuck, Chairman
House Education Committee

JRR/st

cc: House Education Committee Members
Honorable James Rhoades, Chairman- Senate Education Committee
Mr. Arthur Coccodrilli, Chair, Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Secretary- Department of Education