

Minority Report
Conference Committee for SB1042
teacher certification; reciprocity
April 19, 2017

We oppose SB1042, teacher certification; reciprocity because the conference committee amendment fails to address fundamental problems in the underlying legislation. The bill neither provides adequate means to alleviate the teacher shortage in Arizona nor does it maintain appropriate standards for the teaching profession. Furthermore, the drafting of this legislation was rushed and riddled with errors. These concerns could not be addressed because the conference committee chairman and chairwoman refused to allow open debate of the amendment. This silenced discussion from legislators and the public alike. This process went against a fundamental principle of democracy.

Instead of addressing the true cause of the teacher shortage crisis in Arizona, this legislation weakens teaching standards and makes it easier for unqualified individuals to mold the minds of our children. The fundamental cause of our state's teacher shortage is a demonstrated lack of respect for teachers, poor pay and large class sizes. Arizona teachers are among the lowest paid educators in the country and have larger class sizes than the national average. If this bill provided for more pay, peer-to-peer mentoring or addressed the concerns of educators who are now in the classroom, we could certainly start addressing the shortage. That is not the case with SB1042.

We also have particular concerns with those provisions that retroactively approve denied or revoked applications from providers of alternative preparation programs. This bill creates a second chance for a specific teacher preparation program that failed to meet the standards set by the Department of Education and was denied approval by the State Board of Education. This legislation circumvents the State Board's authority and sets a clear precedent for organizations that fail to meet reasonable standards to come to the legislature.

We are outraged at these continued attacks on our teachers and the clear lack of respect shown towards their profession. There are currently several pathways, both traditional and non-traditional, for individuals to become teachers. In addition, this legislation fails to consider the factors that have led to our current teacher shortage. Low pay, working conditions, and lack of respect for the profession are main drivers leading educators out of the classroom. We should be supporting our teachers and holding them accountable to appropriate standards ensuring our children receive the best education possible throughout the state.

For these reasons, we oppose SB1042 as amended by the conference committee.

Senator Catherine Miranda

Representative Lela Alston