

October 20, 2016

Coalition Statement on Final Teacher Preparation Program Regulations

On October 12, the U.S. Department of Education released final regulations for teacher preparation programs. While the regulations have been changed in minor ways from the proposed rule, they retain the basic structure of evaluating teacher preparation programs based on a federally mandated framework that requires student learning outcomes measurement and linking such performance to Title IV federal student aid eligibility. As a broad coalition of national organizations representing teachers, state leaders, local school leaders, institutions of higher education, and schools and colleges of education, we are particularly concerned about a federal higher education regulation placing unfunded mandates on PK-12 schools, districts, tribes, states, and institutions of higher education. The regulation encroaches on local, tribal, and state decision making, as well as on the academic autonomy of higher education.

In the midst of a serious teacher shortage—most notably for STEM, special education, and English language instruction—and a significant decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs, these burdensome regulations will decrease the likelihood of every student having access to a fully prepared teacher. By requiring student outcome measures as one of the metrics to rate programs, they will disadvantage programs serving the communities that most need well-prepared teachers, such as those with low-income and high-minority populations and students with disabilities. The regulations will likewise impede progress toward increasing the diversity of the teaching profession—a serious challenge throughout our nation—as many teachers of color are recruited from and seek to teach in high-need schools.

Requiring every state to rate each of the 26,000 preparation programs every year using four prescribed metrics is a demanding and costly enterprise for which there is little capacity and even fewer resources at the state, local, and institutional level. Setting a precedent of tying access to federal student financial aid to a yet-to-be-determined rating system represents a monumental policy shift which deserves a full vetting with all stakeholders and Congress. In conflict with the recently enacted, bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act, the regulations call for an expansion of student assessments to include “non-tested grades and subjects,” a policy that was clearly rejected by Congress in the new law.

We will continue to make our voices heard in policy arenas at the federal and state level in support of securing access to a well-prepared, profession-ready teacher for all of our nation’s students.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
American Federation of Teachers
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
ASBO International
Association of Education Service Agencies
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Teacher Educators

Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Education Association
National Governors Association
Public Advocacy for Kids
Rural School and Community Trust
STEM Education Coalition
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
UNCF