

Model Bill: Competency Pathway to Teacher Licensure Act

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as the “Competency Pathway to Teacher Licensure Act.”

(A) Purpose. Nothing in schools is more vital to the success of our children than their teachers. Teachers deserve to enter classrooms fully prepared to deliver an excellent education to each individual student. However, the traditional means of validating whether an adult should be entrusted with this responsibility is broken. Licensing assessments have become too easy, and traditional educator preparation programs have become obsessed with identity politics and other distractions while neglecting to prepare future teachers with the skills they will need to teach reading, math, and other essentials. Meanwhile, while alternative pathways to licensure have grown over time, they are often treated as inferior to traditional routes. Teachers initially licensed through both traditional and alternative licensing pathways are subsequently encouraged or even required to earn graduate-level credits and degrees that countless studies show provide no benefits to students. This legislation will address these challenges to ensure every child has a well-prepared teacher.

(B) Definitions. For the purposes of this Act, the terms:

"Education license" means any license under [*statutory cite to list of educator licenses*].

“Secretary or Secretary of Education” means [*statutory cite to education secretary*]

“State academic standards” mean the standards under [*statutory cite to state academic standards*]

SECTION 2.

(A) Notwithstanding other provisions of law, no individual may be granted any education license without achieving a passing score on the assessments adopted by the Secretary of Education.

(i) All applicants seeking a State license shall be required to pass assessments of content area knowledge for each area of endorsement for which there is an applicable assessment.

(ii) No candidate shall be allowed to serve as the teacher of record until he or she has passed the applicable content area tests.

(B) The Secretary of Education shall allow any resident of the state to earn an education license, regardless of the individual’s prior employment or education history, provided that the individual earns a passing score on all assessments required for the license by the Secretary under this

section and meets the other requirements for licensure under [*cite to other existing requirements such as those for good moral character, clinical practice experience, and background checks*].

(C) No later than 12 months from the effective date of this Act, and every five years thereafter, the Secretary of Education shall adopt and set passing scores for such assessments as well as make determinations for which assessments must be passed in order to be awarded each education license. The Secretary of Education shall base the passing score of the assessment upon the results of a formal standard-setting process in consultation with parents, traditionally and alternatively licensed teachers, and an ideologically diverse group of public, private, and charter school leaders. These assessments must:

- (i) Set a rigorous standard to ensure that future educators have the content, pedagogical, and other knowledge necessary to serve students effectively.
- (ii) Ensure sufficient knowledge of the content covered in the state academic standards relevant to each license.
- (iii) For all applicants seeking a State license in the areas of early childhood education, early childhood special education, elementary education, English language arts, middle grades language arts, reading specialist, reading teacher, special education, speech-language pathologist, and English language learner teacher shall be required to pass an assessment in reading foundations, which shall include assessment of the applicant's understanding of phonological and phonemic awareness, concepts of print and the alphabetic principle, the role of phonics in promoting reading development, word analysis skills and strategies, vocabulary development, application of reading comprehension skills and strategies, and methods for assessing reading development. The reading foundations assessment must also assess applicants' knowledge of assessment, differentiation, and intervention with respect to each component of reading for English learners, students with special needs, and students with advanced skills in some areas of reading.
- (iv) The assessments must be designed to be free of political ideology and neutral to ensure that no person taking the assessments is discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, or other factors unrelated to the person's ability to perform as a licensed educator.

(D) No state agency, instrumentality of the state, school board, or board of a charter school may, in any manner:

- (i) Require or incentivize an individual working in a school to earn postbaccalaureate credits or degrees.

- (1) Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, tying the attainment of postbaccalaureate credits or degrees to hiring, promotion, salary, other compensation, employment benefits, or the assignment of job duties.
- (2) However, nothing in this Act shall be construed to prevent the use of professional development programs that do not tie the attainment of postbaccalaureate credits or degrees to the benefits described in paragraph (D)(i)(1) of this section.

(ii) Use any public funds to pay for postbaccalaureate credits or degrees.

(E) All funds utilized as of the effective date of this Act by any of the entities to promote any of the prohibited activities under Paragraph C of this section shall, to the greatest extent practicable, be repurposed to reward teachers under Section 3 of this Act.

(F) No school board or board of a charter school may enter into any employment or collective bargaining contract that, in any way, restricts the ability of the school board or board of a charter school to:

(i) Hire, retain, or promote teachers or other staff based on merit.

(ii) Make decisions related to hiring, promotion, salary, other compensation, employment benefits, or the assignment of job duties based on:

(1) The difficulty of hiring individuals in certain positions

(2) The demonstrated performance of teachers in serving students, improving academic achievement, or in the teacher's other job duties.

(iii) Reward master teachers or otherwise carry out the provisions of Section 3 of this Act.

(G) The Secretary of Education shall publish the first-attempt passage rate for each approved educator preparation program on each approved assessment.

(H) The Secretary of Education shall cease recognition of an educator preparation program if, for two consecutive years, fewer than 75% of that program's graduates fail to pass the assessments required by the Secretary on the first attempt.

SECTION 3.

(A) A school board or board of a charter school may designate a classroom teacher as a master teacher based on objective performance standards defined by the Secretary of Education. These standards shall measure a teacher's:

(i) Mastery of subject matter and other knowledge, skills, and abilities measured by the assessments in Section 2 of this Act.

(ii) Demonstrated and consistent ability to improve the performance of his or her students in an academic year.

(iii) Success in carrying out responsibilities beyond those typically required of classroom teachers in the teacher's school.

(B) The Secretary of Education may adopt regulations to implement the provisions relating to master teachers.

SECTION 4. This Act takes effect on [*January 1, 20XX*].