

TESTIMONY
HOUSE EDUCATION HEARING ON CHAPTER 49
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Good morning Chairman Roebuck, Chairman Stairs and members of the House Education Committee. I am Dr. Kathleen Shaw, Deputy Secretary of the Office of Post-secondary and Higher Education in the Pennsylvania Department of Education. I am pleased to be here today and to testify about the implementation process created by State Board of Education changes in Chapter 49 (commonly known as Chapter 49-2), which represents a significant but essential transformation in the way that Pennsylvania trains its new teachers.

The changes in Chapter 49-2 replace the current K-6 elementary certificate with two certificates: Prek-4th grade, and 4th grade- 8th grade. It also requires all teachers certified in special education to also be certified in Prek-4th grade, 4th grade-8th grade, or 7th – 12th grade. Finally, it requires all new teachers and education specialists to graduate ready to teach all students by imbedding 9 credits of Special Education and 3 credits on teaching English Language Learners into all certificate programs.

The goal of Chapter 49-2 is to insure that all of our children emerge from their educational experiences ready to succeed in this society—whether by going on to college or entering the workforce. With your help, the Rendell administration has made historic investments in our prek-12 schools to provide the resources needed to achieve this goal. But we will fall far short if we do not also insure that our teachers are up to the challenge. We know that teachers are the single most powerful predictor of student success. While the changes required by Chapter 49-2 are undoubtedly challenging for teacher preparation programs, I have faith that our excellent higher education institutions can rise to the challenge.

Like other professions such as medicine, nursing, and accounting, teaching requires a specific set of knowledge, skills, and practices. It is both an art and a science. Chapter 49-2 lays the foundation for insuring that our teachers have the content, pedagogy and knowledge of human development to effectively teach all of our students. If we are to prepare a workforce up to the challenges posed by the 21st Century Global Economy, our teachers need to hit the ground running and be ready on the first day. Thanks to your support, Chapter 49-2 helps to accomplish this.

Our work in this arena is right in line with both national and state reports. As you know, the Governor's Commission on Training America's Teachers indicates that both k-12 teachers and administrators report that their initial preparation is lacking. The fact that College of Education Deans reported exactly the opposite beliefs—that is, their graduates are very well prepared to enter the classroom—points to a disconnect that we must address. To do so, the report calls for greatly increased oversight by PDE, and the development of accountability mechanisms that will insure that preparation programs are

performing at high standards. The Higher Education Reauthorization Act echoes many of these recommendations, as do recent reports issued by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Because certification programs at institutions of higher education provide a license to enter a profession, they are held to a different set of standards than non-certification programs or majors. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's authority to issue professional teaching certificates is vested in the Department by the State Board of Education, and also by the federal government, as per Sections 205 and 207 of the Title II Higher Education Opportunity Act. In fact, our federal funding is dependent on setting criteria that raises the standards for entry into the teaching profession, and is specific enough to allow us to adequately assess whether programs are performing well.

In implementing the revised Chapter 49 regulations, the Department of Education created a process for collaborating extensively with the field. Over an 18-month period, PDE worked closely with workgroups that were comprised of individuals from all sectors of higher education, as well as PreK-12 teachers, educational administrators, parents, and national experts to develop the individual guidelines for the PreK-4th grade, 4th grade-8th grade, and Special Education certifications. In total, PDE held 158 meetings with the workgroups and others from the field to vet the draft certification program guidelines repeatedly. By choosing to work directly and deeply with the field, we have insured that the final guidelines are informed by a broad range of perspectives, reflect the best thinking of the field, and strike a balance between clearly articulated requirements and the flexibility that institutions need to determine how they will meet these requirements.

Our old guidelines provided almost no clear guidance to the field regarding elements of a high-quality program. As a result, we saw huge variation in the breadth and depth of basic elements of teacher preparation programs. Our revised guidelines are designed to correct these shortcomings. Let me describe a few of the most important improvements:

- They provide a detailed framework for what teachers need to know and be able to do, tied to specific credit amounts—a way to clearly communicate the relative importance of each competency;
- They require institutions to show that faculty members are qualified to teach specific courses based on their own relevant experience; and
- They ensure that all teacher candidates take grade-band specific courses in relevant content, human development and pedagogy – in other words, if a candidate is preparing to teach middle school students then the candidate must have mastery over the subject area content and have a solid understanding of how children that age learn and behave.

We have heard from some that PDE's guidelines are too specific, and that they violate institutional autonomy. Let me take a moment to respond to these concerns. Because PDE has the responsibility for determining whether a preparation program is approved, it is important that our guidelines communicate clearly and explicitly the criteria against which each program will be judged. That kind of clarity simply has not existed up until

this point. Yet our new guidelines do not dictate a standard curriculum or specific courses; instead they provide the flexibility for institutions to determine how they will meet our standards.

Pennsylvania is blessed with a remarkable diversity of higher education institutions, ranging from small, private liberal arts colleges to open-admission community colleges to large, comprehensive state and state-related universities. The curriculum and organizational structures at these institutions are equally varied. As a result of this diversity, different types of institutions encounter different kinds of challenges as they move towards implementation of their new teacher preparation programs. Some institutions have a very large general education curriculum that poses a challenge for incorporating the increased amount of new content that the certificates will require; others have staffing challenges; still others have encountered the internal struggles that often ensue when one department or program is being phased out and others created.

Yet through a combination of strong leadership, collaboration, and a commitment to the spirit of Chapter 49-2, many institutions have already been able to successfully overcome these challenges. For example, three independent institutions—two small, liberal arts colleges and a religious institution—have submitted initial program drafts to us already—well ahead of the date required. Although we have not yet conducted a formal review, our analysis strongly suggests that all three meet our credit requirements, our content requirements and our faculty requirements. We are also hearing encouraging news from a range of PASSHE institutions.

As has always been the case, the program review process will be conducted with significant input from content experts from the field; and if an initial review suggests that a program will not meet the Department's requirements, PDE will provide additional technical assistance and additional time for programs to collect and submit the evidence needed. Moreover, if an institution disagrees with the decision of the Department, there will be a straightforward appeals process in place to resolve the issue. Our goal is not to close down programs; but instead, to set the bar high, and to provide the assistance needed to insure that institutions meet our standards.

Because these programs are new, we do not yet have data on performance measures to evaluate program quality. Instead, new programs must be evaluated based on indicators of high-quality programming, such as the relative amount of weight given to specific competencies or whether faculty members possess the expertise needed to teach specific courses. Yet ultimately, we must insure that our preparation programs are effective. In two years we will begin the full program approval process, which can and should be based on performance measures, such as evidence that students have actually mastered the required content and competencies. To that end, I will announce shortly the formation of a Chapter 49-2 Performance Measures Committee, whose purpose will be to develop a set of performance measures appropriate for each certificate program, as well as a menu of options to provide evidence that students have met these measures. Other states such as Louisiana and Tennessee have had good experiences with such models, and we will be in contact with these states as we embark on this important next step.

PDE is also actively working with the field to provide the kind of technical assistance needed to overcome remaining hurdles. Based on feedback from institutions, PDE technical assistance is designed to be concrete and tailored to the specific needs of each institution's certification program(s). This technical assistance includes:

- Consultants that can be deployed to specific institutions or regions
- Workshops focused on common challenges, such as field experiences
- More frequent and consistent communication regarding timelines and deadlines
- Meetings to bring together key partners, such as community colleges and school districts, to the certification institutions
- Online seminars to assist in the application process.

I know from experience that curricular change of this magnitude is a difficult process. Prior to becoming Deputy Secretary, I served for ten years on the faculty of the College of Education at Temple University, and worked closely with my colleagues on curricular change as a Department Chair, and also as a member of the College's Curriculum Steering Committee. The kind of change that these institutions are engaged in can take up to three to five years; yet we are expecting them to complete the process much more quickly. This tight timeline has created a real hardship for some institutions, and also for some students who may not have graduated from the old programs before the new programs are up and running. Because this is a legitimate concern, Secretary Zahorchak has agreed to grant a six-month extension of the deadline by which students must graduate under the new certificates. This extension will provide the institutions with breathing room to create the kind of strong programs that we envision; and it reduces the chance that some students will get caught between programs. The application deadline for an extension is December 31, 2008. Already, 35% of all programs have applied, and I am encouraged by the positive reaction we have received from the field. Clearly, we are responding to legitimate institutional concerns and providing the support needed for our teacher preparation institutions to meet the high standards that our students need to succeed.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that PDE:

- Is committed to insuring that our new teachers are prepared to enter the classroom ready to effectively teach all students
- Has provided the necessary specificity to insure that programs meet the standards for certification
- Has provided significant flexibility to allow our diverse array of institutions to determine how to meet our standards
- Is prepared to offer the technical support to help every institution successfully design new programs, and
- Is laying the necessary groundwork to move toward an effective performance based higher education system that produces teachers ready to enable student success.

I would be happy to take any questions that you might have.