

To: Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Members of the House Education Committee

From: Jacqueline Edmondson, Associate Dean for Teacher Education and  
Undergraduate Programs, Pennsylvania State University

Re: Testimony on Issues related to the Implementation of Chapter 49

Date: November 13, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you concerning issues related to the implementation of Chapter 49-2. I am Jacqueline Edmondson, Associate Dean for Teacher Education and Undergraduate Programs at Pennsylvania State University. I am also a board member for PAC-TE. For the record, I fully support the concerns expressed to you by our President Kathleen Ruthkowsky earlier this morning. However, rather than restate those concerns, I would like to share some other points for your consideration as we attempt to implement changes to our teacher certification programs.

The first concern is the cost required to come into compliance with Chapter 49-2. These changes will create new costs throughout the Commonwealth, and these expenses are coming at a particularly difficult time for both families and institutions. At University Park alone, we estimate that it will take nearly \$500,000 in additional revenue per year to deliver the requirements for new teacher certification programs. Penn State's campus locations will incur further costs, pushing the estimate closer to a million dollars per year in the face of budget reductions from the state of at least \$15 million. I imagine we are not alone in facing added expenses related to these requirements. We stand ready to work with the state to make the laudable parts of the new programs (e.g., strengthening early childhood preparation and doing a better job helping special needs students) achievable at less cost. Giving institutions more flexibility and time to meet the goals of the new programs would be helpful. There is some precedence for this: NCATE in cognizance of the current budget turmoil has agreed to delay the next round of reviews.

Related to this, we need to be attentive to the impact the certification changes will have on enrollments in teacher education programs across the Commonwealth. We need to be sure that the supply of teachers in critical areas is not diminished. For example, at Penn State we are keeping a close eye on our undergraduate special education program. This program certified 55 students in 2006-2007; however this year we are anticipating that only 33 students will apply to enter the major. This may be an anomaly, but it is something that warrants our attention. Related to this, it will be difficult if not impossible for career changers who hold a bachelor's degree in a related field to become certified through a Masters degree program in special education because of the dual certification requirements.

Another area that deserves our close attention is the impact these changes will have on out-of-state enrollments and the reciprocity agreements that the Commonwealth has shared with other states. Pennsylvania has had a long-standing reputation for excellent teacher education programs, and our teachers have long been actively recruited from other states. We need to work together to ensure our programs remain attractive to out-of-state students and potential employers from other states.

Teacher education has become quite complex, and there is new research emerging that has important implications for how we can best prepare teachers. We imagine the difficult budget situation will make it even more challenging to hire additional staff at PDE. My colleagues and I are willing and even eager to work with PDE to design and implement strong teacher education programs based on the best research and practices in the field. Teacher education needs to be a top priority, led by experts in the field. While some progress has been made, we see problems in the existing regulations, particularly in the drafts of the program review materials. We have been appreciative of the opportunity to meet and talk with PDE about the program changes; however, given the input we and others have provided, we are puzzled by the few changes that emerged following the consultation process. We are appreciative of the extension period currently available, but given the magnitude of the changes, the complexity of the current proposals and the difficult budget situation, we hope the extension period could be lengthened to review a number of these new requirements.

Thank you.