

My name is Jessica McQueston and I am writing in opposition of the proposed SB 2332. I am a special educator. I went to school for four years to get certified as a special and general educator. I then worked in the K-12 field for six years, while continuing my studies and received a Masters in Special Education.

Special Education Teacher requirements are defined by the federal government under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; 2004). This bill would be in direct contradiction to what the federal government requires and funds. Below, I have listed the personnel requirements from IDEA regarding special education teachers.

(c) Qualifications for special education teachers. (1) The qualifications described in paragraph (a) of this section must ensure that each person employed as a public school special education teacher in the State who teaches in an elementary school, middle school, or secondary school—

(i) Has obtained full State certification as a special education teacher (including certification obtained through an alternate route to certification as a special educator, if such alternate route meets minimum requirements described in 34 CFR 200.56(a)(2)(ii) as such section was in effect on November 28, 2008), or passed the State special education teacher licensing examination, and holds a license to teach in the State as a special education teacher, except that when used with respect to any teacher teaching in a public charter school, the teacher must meet the certification or licensing requirements, if any, set forth in the State’s public charter school law;

(ii) Has not had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; and

(iii) Holds at least a bachelor’s degree.

(2) A teacher will be considered to meet the standard in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section if that teacher is participating in an alternate route to special education certification program under which—

(i) The teacher—

(A) Receives high-quality professional development that is sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, before and while teaching;

(B) Participates in a program of intensive supervision that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support for teachers or a teacher mentoring program;

(C) Assumes functions as a teacher only for a specified period of time not to exceed three years; and

(D) Demonstrates satisfactory progress toward full certification as prescribed by the State; and

(ii) The State ensures, through its certification and licensure process, that the provisions in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section are met.

For the past six years, I have worked with pre-service educators at universities within ND and the Midwest. Students began the program without the necessary skills to be successful in the field. During this time, I watched students emerge from the program as special educators after taking numerous courses, fieldwork experiences, and licensure tests all before being eligible to hold a license/endorsement in Special Education. To say that someone can pass a test and be prepared to teach students with disabilities is insulting and goes against federal requirements under IDEA. Students with disabilities deserve equal treatment and should have trained teachers to support their learning. I urge you to remove the ability to receive a license by passing a test from this bill. Our students deserve more than someone who can pass a test. They deserve the best.

Thank you,



Jessica McQuestion, PhD