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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Ryan Sullivan and I am writing at the request of Director Janet Welk to explain my particular situation as an educator seeking licensure in hopes that it will improve my chances and assist in any policy decisions toward which this information may be relevant. I hope my frustration does not lead me to complaint or vulgarity, but it has been an aggravating battle. First, the obligatory background:

My academic/program history begins with tutoring and volunteering in grades 6-12 and undergraduate studies at Mayville State University (2003) for a dual Physical/Mathematics Education major. I moved and transferred to Northern Arizona University in the spring of 2006 with a switch to Secondary Math and Special Education. I moved again, this time to Minnesota in 2008, where I finished my last class via distance learning (University of Iowa) and obtained degrees in Secondary Mathematics and Special Education from NAU. Minnesota granted me provisional licenses in Developmental, Emotional/Behavioral, and Learning Disabilities, as well as Secondary Mathematics. After a brief period of substitute teaching, I began a position at Sauk Rapids-Rice High School as a special education teacher, where half of my day is spent teaching pull-out Pre-Algebra, Geometry, and study/life/social skills.

Personally, teaching has always been the plan for me. I had significant social and behavioral issues in grades K-4, yet found release in helping other kids. From kindergarten to present day, I helped my best friend, who has mild Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, through academics and social minefields. Through him, I found a love of helping others learn, and knew I would be a teacher by sixth grade. Much of my middle and high school years were spent tutoring and volunteering in my friend's special education classroom. Unfortunately, it wasn't until transferring to NAU that I was able to enter a SpEd program (Mayville did not have one at the time). I spent three years working in group homes for boys with Emotional/Behavioral disorders, where I learned more than any postsecondary educational institution could ever teach me. I learned and utilized behavioral management and therapy techniques that other educators gain only after years of experience. I gained valuable knowledge of related services and state programs for children, plus a whole other world of Zen-like patience. More importantly, my experiences in group homes and undergraduate content provided me with an answer for my own challenges throughout life. My previously diagnosed PTSD, Intermittent Explosive Disorder, and Sensory Disorder were mislabeled Asperger's Disorder. Not only has teaching been my passion since I was ten years old, but my experiences and own life have always revolved around special needs.

Unfortunately, my experiences with bureaucracy in the Minnesota Department of Education threaten to deprive me of that passion. I fought and argued with MDE Licensing for months before receiving restricted licensure (3/9/09), with even that requiring direct intervention from then-director John Mellick. I was told that I would need to complete a Humanities requirement (frustrating since I had to do the same upon transferring to AZ) and provide proof of student teaching at the elementary level in special education and the grade 5-7 range in mathematics by June 2012 to gain full licensure. The caveat that wasn't explained to me until last year was that I need a Minnesota University to sign off on the license requirements. After extensive research, I found the local University (St Cloud State) to be comparable with others and I sought an appointment with them.


Much to my surprise, SCSU informed me that I would be required to take three classes to renew just one license (LD), with another two for each of the other special education licenses. The director of the SpEd department actually laughed at me and commented that I should have started sooner, which was particularly aggravating as I had been seeking information from them for months. I enrolled in their graduate program, seeking to make the best of a poor situation. Unfortunately, the money-sucking red tape was far from over. In my next conversation with this director, she

amended her requirements to add another class, pending evaluation of two OTHER classes. I am now looking at four graduate classes, possibly six, simply to have a license and a job next fall (never mind the \$6000-\$9000 price tag). Adding insult to injury, the mathematics department finally responded to me that same week, requiring three undergraduate classes, all of which I have already completed, before I can regain my math license. Finally, I received a licensure requirement and program of study letter from SCSU detailing five years and over \$20,000 in part-time graduate classes I would need to complete before having full licensure in my degree areas.

I have attached my transcripts (besides KSP 450 Humanities from MSU-Mankato, lost in the recent move), course descriptions, degrees, license, and Praxis scores, as well as the chicken-scratch course equivalency document I received from St Cloud State. I have also taken the liberty of writing course notes and including my "what the heck do I do now?" decision tree. Hopefully you can make sense of it all, because my understanding has been repeatedly rebuffed by the Minnesota Department of Education and its universities.

Modesty aside, I know I am a very good teacher. I have improved the efficiency of my high school's academic and transition programs, provided a special education math teacher to a school that sorely needed one, and been appointed to the district AYP and Math Curriculum Committees in my first three years as an educator. My students are the best behaved and most successful of any case manager's, and I regularly receive praise from parents and colleagues for going the extra mile. From 7 am to 6 pm, I pour my soul into this job that I love. Bureaucracy and money games are forcing me to decide between abandoning the education I have already received or leaving a school and students that I care very much about. Any of my colleagues that I have discussed this with are shocked. My savings are dwindling with each class, my patience disappearing with each conversation with SCSU, and my options shrinking to only two. Either I bend over and accept this painfully obvious extortion of other-state educators, or leave my state of residence short one more quality teacher. It is for these reasons that I look toward North Dakota, my true home, for any help you can provide. I have plenty to offer, if someone will just let me show it.

Most Sincerely,



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