


To: Michigan House Education Standing Committee
From: Dr. Micheal Saylor 
Date: June 16, 2020
Re: SB 657

Eastern Michigan University appreciates the opportunity to expand upon the opposition you have heard from other universities to Senate Bill 657 which is designed to allow an alternative route to becoming a special education teacher. As professional educator preparers we believe that this will undermine the quality of education Michigan's K-12 special needs students. These are the students with the greatest focused needs. We believe that the current legislation is inconsistent with both MDE and Federal regulations protecting the adequate education of this vulnerable population.

Here are three examples of where they bill fails to meet the needs of students.

- 1. Classroom experiences:** The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), research in teacher preparation and accrediting bodies all agree that clinical experience in multiple setting with multiple types of students is a hallmark of quality teacher preparation. The MDE requires such in their [clinical experience rule](#)ⁱ. In addition, the national accrediting body for the preparation of future teachers, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) requires the same rich [clinical experiences](#)ⁱⁱ. For special education teachers this is even more critical due to the additional and specialized skills and knowledge required to be an effective teacher of special needs children. Experience in a single appointment will not prepare the person to be effective with specific kinds of special education students. A teacher with a special education endorsement can teach in a special education program in the area of their endorsement or in a resource room working with all students per [MDE rule](#)ⁱⁱⁱ. It is the resource room assignment that requires much more experience than required of this bill.
- 2. Credit hours (or equivalent):** The addition from the bill of subsections 2.A.iv. d and e from line 15 on page 3 of the senate approved bill increases the credit hour (or equivalent) from 12 to 32 and includes a broad list of topics that must be included. Below are two examples of concerns with this move.
 - *Quality control:* MDE doesn't have the capacity to adequately monitor quality of programs for "equivalent" credits. At universities, programs are accredited both through national university accrediting bodies (ie. Higher Learning Commission) and educator preparation accrediting bodies (ie. CAEP). A credit hour and the courses they represent are held to high standards with the consequences of not meeting those standards sufficient to close down the institution. There is no such check for "equivalent" credits.

- *Definition of credit insufficient:* In addition, the bill equates 1 credit hour with 7 hours of instruction. This is inconsistent with any measure. For example, a typical university equivalent would be 1 credit hour = total minimally of 12.5 meeting hours (with minimum 25 hours of work outside of class). Per MDE rule for state continuing education clock hours (SCECHs), 25 hours of professional development = 1 credit hour. Using 7 hours is woefully insufficient.

3. Unnecessary:

- The present requirements for special education endorsement is a knowledge of general education (gained through earning an elementary or secondary certificate) and a minimum of 30 credit hours of special education course work, with 20 unique to the category for endorsement (MARSE, 2020). For example, EMU has a Master of Arts in Teaching program of 30-39 semester credit hours – depending on the specific endorsement sought. It also include 4-6 credits of clinical experience in the special needs area of the sought-after new endorsement. The proposed waiver in the MDE rule regarding the elementary and secondary professional courses would allow universities like us to have the same program as the proposed alternative certification routes, avoiding the need for the alternative route altogether. We note that MDE already has a route for experimental programs with the advantage of requiring teacher preparation units to assess their experimental process to see if the teachers prepared under them are highly qualified to work with the category of special needs children for which they are being prepared.
- The caveat for practicing certified teachers (without special education endorsement) in subsection 2.A.iv.e.(ii),(e) pp 4-5 is particularly problematic because it waives the credit hour requirements. It is unclear what requirements the teacher would need to meet. This is also unnecessary. The MDE already has an option for such people to become special education teachers while working as special education teachers while enrolled in an approved program through the [Temporary Teacher Approval](#) program.

Overall, we are very concerned that this legislation is not fixing any problem and is actually increasing the probability that our most vulnerable children will be not be served well. The current certification system has mechanisms to address these issues this legislation seeks to address, while maintaining and ensuring high quality programs and preparation. We urge you to vote against this bill, and we are available for further conversation if so desired.

ⁱ “In alignment with national accreditation expectations, and to build candidate competence and marketability, it is expected that all programs provide a sequential set of supported opportunities to work with, reflect upon, and support the needs of a diverse student population. A clinically based teacher preparation program should be designed so that candidates complete an intentional, meaningful series of diverse, cohesive, clinical experiences integrated with the preparation curriculum. These should occur in multiple settings that provide teacher candidates opportunities to work with learners who represent the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity of Michigan’s diverse communities, including students who come from underrepresented or marginalized populations.” (MDE Clinical Requirements, 2019, p5)

ⁱⁱ “CAEP Component 2.3--The provider works with partners to design clinical experiences of sufficient depth, breadth, diversity, coherence, and duration to ensure that candidates demonstrate their developing effectiveness and positive impact on all students’ learning and development. Clinical experiences, including technology-enhanced learning opportunities, are structured to have multiple performance-based assessments at key points within the program to demonstrate candidates’ development of the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions, as delineated in Standard 1, that are associated with a positive impact on the learning and development of all P- 12 students.” (CAEP Handbook, 2019, p 102).

iii “Any teacher who is assigned to a **special education program** must have an endorsement that matches that program. For example, a program for students with cognitive impairment must be taught by a teacher with the Cognitive Impairment (SA) endorsement on their teaching certificate.

Teachers assigned to a **resource program** may hold **any** special education endorsement. The only exceptions are for teachers whose only special endorsement is the Physical Education for Students with Disabilities (SP) or the Early Childhood-General and Special Education (ZS) endorsement.

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