



Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators

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Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I present the following testimony on behalf of TASPA (Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators) regarding SB 83 relating to national certification of certain public school teachers.

We appreciate and thank Senator Shapleigh for his support of public education and his concern that teachers be as qualified as possible to serve Texas students. We also recognize the merits of National Certification, as those who earn it must demonstrate a high standard of excellence, and data seem to show that National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certified teachers are successful.

While TASPA is not opposed to the *concept* of finding ways to promote National Certification, TASPA is concerned about the timing and the associated cost given the current funding for schools and the number of teachers without even a standard certificate, with additional numbers of certified teachers teaching outside of their certification area. This proposal does not alleviate the teacher shortage nor increase the number of NCLB "highly qualified" teachers for all children.

According to SBEC data for 2004 (Who is Teaching in Texas), there were 16,485 teachers without a standard certificate for the shortage areas of Bilingual Education / ESL, Special Education, Foreign Language, Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science (Technology Applications), and there were an additional 32,381 teacher teaching out of field in those same subjects.


There are Federal funds, according to a posting on the SBEC website at <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us/SBECOnline/certinfo/nbpts0405candidates.asp>, to fund 50% of the NBPTS certification costs for 482 individuals at \$1,150, with one additional subsidy of \$700. That would leave the state with having to fund 2/3 of the remaining \$1,150 for up to 500 individuals, or \$383,335 annually, and the school districts to shoulder the remaining \$191,665. It is unclear from the bill who would have to shoulder the \$20,000 additional cost for the 18 individuals who would not receive any federal funds for their certification, given the cap as posted on the SBEC website.

Of additional concern is that as written the bill makes it optional for teachers to pursue the certification, but once a teacher follows that course, it does not seem to be optional for the employing district to fund the district portion of the certification costs.

In addition, payment for the costs involved will still not be an adequate incentive for teachers to pursue this. It will require funding stipends for this additional certification, as we already have done for Master Teacher incentives. At Klein ISD, for example, they currently pay teachers who are nationally certified an annual stipend of \$1,500. Since the certification is valid for ten years, that is a total of 15,000 if the teacher stays the entire time at Klein ISD. Klein ISD has never had more than one teacher in any given year who is nationally certified, as the certification process is very labor intensive. In a recent survey of TASPAs members, 65% (141 out of 216 respondents) indicate that they already pay stipends for teachers in shortage areas, ranging from \$500 to \$6000 depending on the district and subject, with a majority of stipends in the \$2,000 range (+-\$500). Districts also pay stipends for Masters degrees and for Master Teacher certification.

TASPA members indicate that while the participation in the National Certification Program appears to be a step toward excellence, it is possibly getting ahead of the game in the respect that first we need to get fully certified teachers in the classrooms before we begin to emphasize the national certification achievement. The cost to achieve the certification could be placed toward gaining regular certification for the large numbers of classrooms without a certified teacher.

Testimony respectfully submitted February 22, 2005 by:



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