

# 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) and TASA (Texas Association of School Administrators) regarding SB 1912 relating to certification of educators from outside the state.

I commence my testimony by recognizing the SBEC Staff for their diligent work and significant achievements in meeting the needs of the state despite being understaffed, overworked, and on an insufficient budget. The SBEC Board and TEA Commissioner Neeley are equally deserving of praise.

TASPA first brought the issue of out-of-state credential review to the SBEC Board at their July 28, 2006 Board meeting. Since that date, SBEC has made great progress in reducing the backlog of out-of-state credential review through streamlining their processes, the use of technology, adding temporary staff, and requesting overtime of their staff in crunch times resulting from recruiting season.

Despite these significant improvements, instances remain in which districts' ability to hire, recruit, or retain otherwise highly qualified teachers have been hampered by the time-lag between the start-date of the one-year non-renewable temporary certificate and the time of credential review completion and notification of the required exams to be taken. Examples of the limitations, the details of which are in the attached document with TASPA member feedback, include:

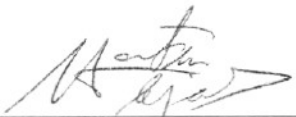
2. Having to issue “Special June 1<sup>st</sup> Contracts” contingent on the passage of their examinations by June 1<sup>st</sup> (thus allowing for more test administrations).
3. Not being able to hire the candidates at all unless they have completed the required review and examinations.

Each of the scenarios above causes undue stress on the teacher and the loss or potential loss of a qualified teacher for the district. While there are may be other reasons for a teacher’s failure to meet the certification requirements within the first year, SB 1912 will give out-of-state teachers a more fair opportunity at taking and passing the tests, in particular considering that new teachers on probationary certificates are given at least one additional year in which to receive full certification.

**A key modification TASPAs and TASA request of this bill is to remove references specifically limiting the option to ISDs affected by BRAC, as the concern, while not pervasive, is state-wide and not limited to ISDS serving military installations.** This bill and the proposed amendment will also reduce time pressures on SBEC by not penalizing the educator for delays due to surges in applications for review.

As a separate but related issue regarding out-of-state certified teachers, several states have adopted a new requirement in a move to prevent Texas from hiring their graduates: A new graduate needs to teach in their state for a full year prior to being given a full standard teaching certificate, even though they have already completed an educator preparation program, passed the required exams, and even completed student teaching. **TASPAs recommends a rule change from requiring “full certification from another state” to require completion of an educator preparation program, passing exams comparable to the TExES, and completing student teaching for allowing out-of-state teachers to teach in Texas.**

Respectfully,



Dr. Alejandra A. Martin  
Executive Director



## Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators

TASPA member comments and feedback regarding the review of out-of-state credentialed educators

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Last summer we had an out-of-state teacher who had been waiting for SBEC to tell him the area in which he could be certified by Texas. We had to pass on hiring this young man whose wife works for our district because of this since his hire would put us out of compliance both with Texas and NCLB. We need and want these folks who have worked hard to be able to be employed. Texas cannot afford to pass up certified teachers. By the way, by the time SBEC did let him know something, another district hired him, he has to commute, we lost a certified 4-8 generalist and we all know how hard these certifications are to come by. Our loss was because of these delays in notification concerning certifications.

Monahans-Wickett-Pyote ISD.

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Dr. Martin,

Thank you for your e-mail. While Keller ISD has not had instances where a teacher's one year certificates expires before they even had a chance to take an exam we have been very concerned that they receive their one year certificate and have only one, possibly two chances to take examinations before their expiration date. New teachers on probationary certificates are given three years in which to receive full certification but experienced teachers coming in from out of state are sometimes only given a very short amount of time to find out about, apply for and pass Texas exams. This does not make sense and is very discouraging to our teachers who are coming in from out of state.

Changing the one-year certification dates to expire on the anniversary of the date on which their review of credentials was completed would be a great improvement!

Thank you for your help.

Keller ISD

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Alex, we had 23 out-of-state teachers whose contracts were not renewed by Humble ISD last month due to their failure to complete certification requirements. I cannot say with certainty how many of those did not attempt required exams because they did not hear from SBEC in a timely manner. I only know of 4 for sure who submitted their paperwork in June and did not hear from SBEC for 6 months--and only then after they had called and forced someone to respond.

If the bill does not pass, we should continue to lobby SBEC for some administrative changes which might help us. The districts have been left "out of the loop" because all correspondence is between the teacher and SBEC. If the online certificate application had a district name where the teacher has been employed, we could be contacted prior to an application becoming "deactivated" or if an out-of-state teacher's emails are being returned, or if SBEC does not get response from a teacher in 15-30 days. Additionally, more online tests for subject matters and more testing dates would help tremendously.

SBEC has made tremendous strides and is always willing to listen to us. In spite of this out-of-state review issue we have had this year, I feel they do a great job!

Humble ISD



Hi Alex,

I have four (4) elementary teachers that we are struggling with this year because they are out-of-state teachers on a One Year Certificate. These teachers have very little time in terms of adjusting to a new home, a new school system, a new environment, etc. On top of all those adjustments, they have to take examinations, during that one-year time frame that very well could determine their livelihood and career. It is do or die for them. I have one Elementary Music teacher that was given a letter exempting her from the EC-4 Generalist exam. We are not sure whether it was her error, or whether SBEC meant to exempt her from the EC-12 music exam. We asked her to seek clarification. Bottom line, we asked her to go the safe route and sign up for both the EC-12 music and EC-12 PPR exams. I am in agreement that these teachers need more flexibility and consideration to teach a second year and be given a second year to finalize their certification.

Harlingen CISD

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Alex,

This has caused several of our new teachers to receive a "Special June 1st Contract" for their 07-08 renewal. Their review letter was not received until late January or early February. Contract renewal for districts is March. Our only option is to give them a contract with a "special" clause that says it is void unless they have taken and passed "all" required exams by June 1st.

The earliest exam date is in April for these teachers. We have hired some excellent teachers from other states that are in a panic now.

Our district always looks for a certified applicant over an alternative applicant. However, with this delay, it is forcing districts to look more at alternative applicants who have 2 years to complete their certification requirements instead of the 1 year for out of state teachers.

This delay has an impact on the district NCLB report as well.

Carroll ISD

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Alex,

The greatest concern that we hear from our teachers is that the approvals for the required tests (on the registration side) were delayed. Due to this, the teachers were not able to register to take the required tests. As a result of these delays, many teachers missed the first test dates and had to register for the February test.

Thanks.

Alief ISD Human Resources



I don't have an example for SBEC back-log as identified. However, the new requirement to have test authorization before the educator can even register for the test(s), more problems will create additional problems/issues. We probably have not seen the effects yet at our district since we encouraged applicants to take exams last summer for highly qualified purposes before the new restrictions on testing were put into place.

Another related issue for out of state educators and testing is the limitations on using HOUSE for these educators to be considered highly qualified. Not being able to take the exam until up to 6 months after the application for the review of credentials during the peak season means that many potential candidates are not being hired because they do not yet meet highly qualified standards.

Since our school district serves a military installation and its surrounding communities, we have many military dependents that move to our area who are certified in other states but are not yet considered highly qualified due to testing requirements. These moves occur over the summer, sometimes with very little advance notification.

Last summer, our district's out of state applicants were able to take the exams prior to the certification review (prior to the restrictions added with the transition to ETS for testing). We probably hired 20-30 educators who passed exams this past summer for highly qualified purposes. They were primarily elementary teachers.

Thank you for all your support and work with the legislature!!

Killeen Independent School District

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We have 6 teachers that were hired in August, that have still not been notified about which tests to take. I am a little concerned about this since SBEC said they were "up-to-date" at their last meeting. So one of two things could be the problem--they were incorrect at the SBEC meeting or there are other issues with these employees' credentials.

In our testimony, here is the point I want to make. If SBEC or the legislature states something to the effect that this last year was just a problem and it has been resolved, then my take on that is, well, if we get them timely, it won't matter if they have a year from the date they receive their information. But for the few that may not get their information, wouldn't it be good to give them additional time. We might even state that if the exceed 45 days from the date of application, then the person would get an extension. If they return the information within 45 days, the standard year would apply.

El Paso ISD

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I have one on behalf of Fort Worth ISD. They do own fingerprinting and criminal history checks (FBI - national) on all of their teachers - using same databases as SBEC. SBEC will not accept their checks on out-of-state teachers so out-of-state teachers have to schedule another fingerprint to be taken at a different location to satisfy SBEC. Fort Worth has complained to no avail.

*Texas Association of School Boards*

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# Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators

TASPA member comments and feedback regarding the review of out-of-state credentialed educators

**From :** "Ralph Madrid" <[rmadrid@lubbockisd.org](mailto:rmadrid@lubbockisd.org)>

**To :** Alejandra \ (Alex) Martin <[amartin@taspa.org](mailto:amartin@taspa.org)>

The concern you have addressed is a concern in our school district..

As you can see, the problem is the delays the teachers encounter...some by choice, others by the hoops they have to jump through to get things completed in a timely fashion.

Thanks

We don't feel that is an SBEC problem. The problems that we have encountered are:

Teachers completing their review and submitting documents to SBEC for review in a timely manner.

Transcripts - some out of state universities do not submit the official transcript to SBEC for review in a timely manner. EX. - Oral Roberts University will not conferr a teachers degree until May when she completed all course work and has received her Oklahoma certificate in December.

Finger prints - This has become a huge problem. They take forever. If the teacher selected to have the finger prints done by the new Identix company, which there are only very limited locations and appointment times.

There needs to be more locations to have this process completed, or perhaps allow each district to have an opportunity to complete the finger prints of their personnel required to have finger prints completed. This includes teachers and new para's.

Submitting test scores for possible exemption is confusing to the educator. The teachers are required to submit another \$45 to have these reviewed.

NCLB is a bigger issue trying to get the testing complete before the last instructional school day to be deemed Highly Qualified which is required of all out of state teachers.

Thanks,

Plano ISD

Alex,

I have two teachers who still have not received their certificates even though they have taken the necessary tests, their credentials have been reviewed and they have paid.

Hutto ISD

None at this time.

Thanks!

Cleburne ISD

Poteet ISD currently has no out of state teachers who have not met Texas certification requirements.



We do not have any out-of-state teachers that were impacted.

Angleton ISD

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At this time, Laredo Independent School District is not aware of any instance(s) in which out of state teachers were impacted due to delays by SBEC. Thanks.

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Greetings Alex:

Ector County Ind. School District hires out-of-state teachers. To my knowledge, our District has not had an issue with this matter.

Thank you for sending us this information.

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Hi, Alex.

Socorro ISD will not hire an out-of-state teacher who has not completed the review of credentials through SBEC. Consequently, we do not have this problem. When we hire someone he/she already has received the info from SBEC concerning the required TExES. If we begin to have more problems filling positions, we may need to rethink hiring out-of-state certified without reviews. Hope this info helps.

Ms. Martin,

My name is Frances Muñoz, I am the Certification Specialist for Socorro ISD in El Paso, Texas. For our out-of-state applicants, we do require that they have their credentials reviewed before they are considered for a position, therefore we do not run into the problem that is stated in your e-mail. We do request that they don't apply for the one year certificate until they have been hired.

If there is any other information that I can provide for you, please let me know.

Thanks

Frances Muñoz  
Certification Specialist

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