
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 681 **Hearing Date:** June 21, 2017
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Version: June 12, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Ian Johnson

Subject: Teacher credentialing: teacher preparation outside of the United States

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to determine whether the national teaching credential standards of countries other than the United States are equivalent to California's standards to expedite the processing time for the CTC's review of teaching credential applications from individuals outside of the United States. Further, this bill clarifies that proof of a credential, certificate, or permit authorizing service in a classroom issued by the CTC meets the requirement for authorizing salary payments to school employees whose credential or permit applications are pending at the CTC.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes individuals who have completed a teacher preparation program outside of the United States to apply to the CTC for a credential.
- 2) Requires the CTC or an evaluating agency approved by the CTC to determine that the institution's coursework, programs, or degrees are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States.
- 3) Allows county offices of education to issue temporary certificates for out-of-state credential holders whose credential applications are being processed by the CTC.
- 4) Provides that a school district shall not provide for the registration of a valid certification or other document authorizing the holder to serve in a position requiring certification qualifications as an employee of the school district until the school district has obtained a certificate of clearance from the CTC.
- 5) Authorizes county offices of education to issue temporary certificates for certified employees of nonpublic schools whose credential applications are being processed by the CTC, under the same conditions as those issued for employees of school districts, as specified. Requires that, prior to issuing a temporary certificate, county offices of education obtain a certificate of clearance for the individual from the CTC.

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to determine that the national standards for coursework, programs, or degrees in a country other than the United States are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States; and, specifies if the CTC determines that the other country's national standards are equivalent, an individual who holds or is eligible for a credential in that country is presumed to have satisfied the California teaching credential requirements.
- 2) Authorizes the CTC to enter into an agreement with an evaluating agency as necessary to make a determination regarding another country's national standards.
- 3) Requires the CTC to adopt regulations, including regulations that do both of the following:
 - a) Establish uniform standards for making a determination regarding another country's national standards.
 - b) Prescribe the procedure by which a determination regarding another country's national standards shall occur.
- 4) Specifies that proof that the holder has obtained a credential, certificate, or permit authorizing the performance of services in a classroom issued by the CTC meets the requirement for authorizing salary payments to school employees whose credential or permit applications are pending at the CTC.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, current law allows individuals who have completed a teacher preparation program outside of the United States to apply to the CTC for a credential on the basis of that preparation. In order to do so, the CTC or an evaluating agency approved by the CTC must determine that the institution's coursework, programs, or degrees are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States. The CTC currently has the authority to evaluate foreign transcripts and determine equivalence for credentialing purposes. However, the CTC or an approved evaluator does not have the authority to determine that a country has academic and credentialing standards equivalent to those of regionally accredited institutions in the United States; thus, allowing applicants from such a country to forego an individual foreign transcript evaluation by the CTC.
- 2) ***Many foreign countries have high teacher standards.*** According to the CTC, "Foreign transcript evaluations require an additional investment of time and expense on the part of a teacher who wants to come to the United States and teach in a California school. Moreover, it increases their uncertainty as to whether or not coming to California is a viable option. These factors may combine to create an unnecessary disincentive to recruiting qualified out-of-country educators to serve in California public schools. Many foreign countries

have standards equal to or greater than the US: Singapore, Canada, South Korea, and Finland, for example, are all known to be producers of high quality teachers. If the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) were authorized to examine national academic and credentialing standards and judge them to be equivalent to those of California, it would eliminate the additional time, uncertainty, and expense for teachers coming from these countries, while still allowing the CTC to examine teachers from non-approved countries on an individual basis."

- 3) ***Learning Policy Institute (LPI) report.*** The LPI's 2016 report, "Addressing California's Emerging Teacher Shortage: An Analysis of Sources and Solutions" included the following summary: "After many years of teacher layoffs in California, school districts around the state are hiring again. With the influx of new K-12 funding, districts are looking to lower student-teacher ratios and reinstate classes and programs that were reduced or eliminated during the Great Recession. However, mounting evidence indicates that teacher supply has not kept pace with the increased demand." The report included the following findings:

Enrollment in educator preparation programs has dropped by more than 70 percent over the last decade.

In 2014-15, provisional and short-term permits nearly tripled from the number issued two years earlier, growing from about 850 to more than 2,400.

The number of teachers hired on substandard permits and credentials nearly doubled in the last two years, to more than 7,700 comprising a third of all the new credentials issued in 2014-15.

Estimated teacher hires for the 2015-16 school year increased by 25 percent from the previous year while enrollment in the University of California and the California State University teacher education programs increased by only about 3.8 percent.

The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) report offered several policy recommendations for consideration, including the creation of more innovative pipelines into teaching.

- 4) ***Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) assessment.*** As part of the Proposition 98 Education Analysis for the 2016-17 Governor's Budget released in February 2016, the LAO included a section on teacher workforce trends in which it examined evidence for teacher shortages in specific areas, identified and assessed past policy responses to these shortages, and raised issues for the Legislature to consider going forward in terms of new policy responses. In the report, the LAO indicated that the statewide teacher market will help alleviate existing shortages over time and that the shortages may decrease without direct state action. However, the LAO noted there are perennial staffing difficulties in specific areas, such as special education, math, and science, for which they encouraged the Legislature to address with narrowly tailored policies rather than with broad statewide policies.

- 5) ***Unintended consequence related to certificates of clearance.*** In addition to addressing foreign transcript evaluations by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), this bill also fixes an unintended consequence of AB 1918 (Chapter 127, Statutes of 2016).

AB 1918 requires county boards of education, before issuing a temporary certificate authorizing classroom service, to obtain a certificate of clearance. According to the CTC, in many cases, teachers in need of a temporary certificate already hold a credential or other certification that required them to go through the exact same background clearance process as the certificate of clearance. This most often occurs when a credentialed teacher is adding new authorized subject areas to their credential. As the new authorization is being processed, counties have historically issued temporary certificates so that teachers can begin working in their new subject area immediately. However, since these teachers have not technically been issued a certificate of clearance as required by AB 1918, they no longer meet the requirements for issuance of a county certificate, despite having been cleared by the CTC.

This bill replaces the term “certificate of clearance” with “a credential, certificate, or permit authorizing the performance of services in the public schools” to address this issue.

SUPPORT

Association of California School Administrators
California Catholic Conference
California State PTA
Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Sponsor)
EdVoice
Public Advocates, Inc.

OPPOSITION

None received

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