

February 2, 2015

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202

RE: Docket ID ED-2014-OPE-0057, Notice for Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program Under Title V of HEA.

Dear Secretary Duncan:

As organizations committed to ensuring that every child has equal access to fully-prepared and effective educators, the Coalition for Teaching Quality (CTQ) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Department of Education's (ED's) Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) on the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program published in the Federal Register on December 3, 2014 (Docket ID ED-2014-OPE-0057).

The Coalition for Teaching Quality is comprised of over 100 national, state, and local organizations committed to the principle that federal policy must ensure all students have access to teachers and school leaders who enter the profession well-prepared to succeed and who prove themselves effective once there. This access is especially critical for traditionally underserved students. Together, we represent a diverse spectrum of civil rights, disability, parent, student, community, educator, rural, higher education, and education policy organizations.

The undersigned organizations are concerned that the proposed regulations will not increase access to highly trained and effective teachers for all students, particularly those who are currently taught at disproportionately higher rates by teachers who are untrained, unlicensed or uncertified, out-of-field, and inexperienced – namely

students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, students in rural areas, and students from low-income families.¹ Indeed, the proposed regulations may have the opposite effect. While each individual organization may have a separate list of concerns and recommendations, the specific concerns of the CTQ are listed below:

1. Alternative route teacher preparation programs should not be held to different standards than traditional route teacher preparation programs regarding rates of teacher employment and retention.

There are a number of factors outside of the control of teacher preparation programs that contribute to employment outcomes after graduation. This includes the new teacher's school climate and working conditions and the availability of induction or mentoring programs for new teachers. Still, compiling data that is consistent across programs regarding a program's employment outcomes is an important exercise in the interest of transparency. The rate at which a program's graduates become and remain employed as teachers can serve as an indicator of program quality for prospective students, policymakers, and the public.

Preliminary data reveal that students from low-income families are taught at disproportionately higher rates by teachers-in-training than their peers.² Unfortunately, alternative route preparation programs have an unfair and misleading advantage in the way a "new teacher" is defined in the proposed regulations, which allows alternative route preparation programs to count all of their participants as employed (as long as they are teachers of record) even while they're still enrolled in alternative route preparation programs, potentially perpetuating the disproportionate share of teachers-in-training teaching students from low-income families.

Additionally, proposed § 612.5(a)(2) allows states to record retention rates of traditional and alternative route teacher preparation programs differently. In doing so the proposed regulation allows states to distort outcomes, prevents full across-program comparisons, and undermines efforts of ensuring transparency. As noted in the Federal Register (page 71839), "a majority of the non-Federal negotiators eventually expressed support for using the measure [teacher retention]

¹ See: U.S. Department of Education (2014), *Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: Teacher Equity*, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, available: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-teacher-equity-snapshot.pdf>; and U.S. Department of Education, Equitable Access to Excellent Educators state data, available: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/resources.html>.

² Dr. Patrick Shields (2008), Expert Declaration of Dr. Patrick Shields, *Renee v. Duncan*, United States District Court, Northern District of California. Available: http://www.publicadvocates.org/sites/default/files/library/expertdeclaration_patrick_shields_cftl_1_18_08.pdf.

as one of a comprehensive set of indicators of the academic content knowledge and teaching skills of a program's new teachers and recent graduates as part of a State's criteria for assessing teacher preparation program performance."

The goal is to determine which programs persistently produce teachers who fail to find jobs or, once teaching, do not remain in teaching and to use the information to improve all programs whether alternate or traditional. Using inconsistent indicators for different pathways into teaching makes little if any sense since all programs are expected to produce the same outcomes. Further, different outcome standards will not allow states to compare different pathway approaches and identify program elements that predict positive employment outcomes.

2. The proposed regulations would have a disproportionate impact on minority-serving institutions and high-need fields. This would have potentially negative consequences for K-12 students in high-need fields.

The proposed regulations would likely have a disproportionate impact on institutions whose primary mission includes providing access to students from underrepresented groups, or whose prior education has provided limited preparation for college, including many public and private minority-serving institutions (MSIs). Of particular concern is that the proposed regulations would mandate states' program approval requirements. One of these requirements would be that teacher preparation programs maintain "rigorous teacher candidate entry and exit qualifications" (NPRM, p. 71835). While rigorous qualifications are important, they should be required only with the proper supports in place to ensure that candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity to become teachers, and to encourage the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. Since the regulations do not put such supports into place, these requirements will harm the diversity of the teaching force and programs which prepare teachers to serve high needs populations.

In addition, MSIs could be further harmed by connecting the eligibility of programs for TEACH grants to the programs' rating via the mandated performance assessment system. Often students attending MSIs require financial aid, and this potential restriction would affect students' access to higher education.

This disproportionate impact on MSIs could have a significant potential impact for K-12 students of color. The U.S. Department of Education projected that the K-12 student population in the U.S. will comprise over 50 percent black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaska Native students by school year 2014-2015, and that percentage will continue to grow.³ Yet the teaching force

³ Hussar, W.J., and Bailey, T.M. (2013). Projections of Education Statistics to 2022 (NCES 2014-051). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

is not nearly as diverse as the student population. In 2014 an estimated 18 percent of the teaching profession were teachers of color.⁴ Increasing the diversity of the teaching workforce is an important goal because it increases interaction of white students with more diverse populations, which can build social trust. Research also reveals that students of color experience improved academic outcomes when teachers of color teach them.⁵ As Ingersoll and May state, “minority students benefit from being taught by minority teachers, because minority teachers are likely to have ‘insider knowledge’ due to similar life experiences and cultural backgrounds.”⁶

Furthermore, programs preparing candidates to teach in high-need schools or high-need fields such as English as a second language would, like all other programs, be assessed in large part on the results of K-12 student standardized tests. Standardized test scores are routinely lower for these groups of students than for others, for reasons that are often not related to teacher preparation (such as socioeconomic status, parents’ education, family resources, school resources, community supports, and student health)⁷.

Given that the student learning outcomes are weighted more heavily than any other indicator required to determine a preparation program’s rating in these proposed regulations (NPRM, p. 71830), programs could seek to place their graduates in less challenging environments where test scores are higher, exacerbating existing shortages in these high-need fields. While this is not the intended consequence of the proposed regulations, it is important to consider the types of selection and placement behavior they could incentivize.

3. The proposed rule undermines existing laws and ongoing activities to increase equity in education.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires that states work to ensure that students of color and students living in poverty are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by inexperienced teachers than their peers (PL 107-110, Section 1111(b)(8)(C)). On November 10, 2014 the Department of Education recommitted itself to this provision by requesting that states submit updated plans

⁴ Boser, U. (2014). *Teacher Diversity Revisited*, Center for American Progress, available: <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/TeacherDiversity.pdf>.

⁵ Ingersoll, R., and May, H. (2011), *Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage*, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, available: http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/1221_minorityteachershortagereportrr69septfinal.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Horace Mann League and the National Superintendents Roundtable (2015) “*School Performance in Context: The Iceberg Effect*”, available: <http://www.superintendentsforumtest.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Released-Iceberg-Effect.pdf>.

to ensure equitable access to experienced, qualified and in-field teachers.⁸ Nevertheless, the proposed regulations promote inequitable distribution of experienced teachers by incentivizing preparation programs to place first-year teachers in high-need schools (NPRM, p. 71826).⁹

New teachers, especially those in high-need schools, benefit greatly from strong, sustained induction programs, which contribute to teachers remaining in the school and in the profession. Without funding to build and maintain induction programs, new teachers too often leave high-need schools and often the profession, and the cycle of new teachers serving in schools where students most need experienced educators continues. By encouraging teacher preparation programs to place recent graduates in high-need schools, these regulations would add to the problem of congregating the least experienced teachers in high-need schools, which is at odds with existing law and ongoing Department of Education and state educational agency activities.

Conclusion

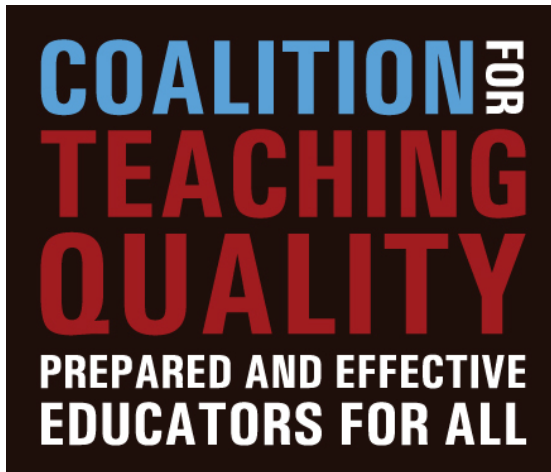
While this list of concerns is not exhaustive, and each individual organization of CTQ may have additional comments, the undersigned organizations share the concerns listed above. We hope that you will consider these as you move forward, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that every student has access to excellent teaching.

Sincerely,
The Coalition for Teaching Quality
(Please see attached for membership)

⁸ Delisle, D. (2014), Letter to Chief State School Offices, Department of Education, available:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/letter11102014.html>.

⁹ As defined in the proposed rules, “a high-need school is in the highest quartile of schools in a ranking of all schools served by a local educational agency, ranked in descending order by percentage of students from low-income families enrolled in such schools, as determined by the local educational agency based on a single or a composite of two or more of the following measures of poverty” (NPRM, P. 71834). In short, the proposed rules define a high-need school as a school with a high proportion of students living in poverty or from low-income families, precisely the students that ESEA requires not be taught at disproportionately higher rates than their peers.



National Organizations

Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Council for School Social Work

American Council on Rural Special Education

American Federation of Teachers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities

ASPIRA Association

Autism National Committee

Center for Teaching Quality

Citizen Action of New York

Citizens for Effective Schools

Coalition for Community Schools

Communities for Excellent Public Schools

Council for Exceptional Children

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

Disability Policy Collaboration, A Partnership of The Arc and UCP

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc.

Education Law Center

FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing

First Focus Campaign for Children

Gamaliel Foundation

Helen Keller National Center

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

Leadership for the Common Good

Learning Disabilities Association of America

Movement Strategy Center

National Alliance of Black School Educators

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness

National Council for Educating Black Children

National Council of Teachers of English

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

National Education Association
National Indian Education Association
National Latino Education Research &
Policy Project
National Network of State Teachers of
the Year
National Opportunity to Learn
Campaign
National PTA
Opportunity Action
Parents Across America
Partnership for 21st Century Skills
Progressive States Action
Public Advocates Inc.
Public Advocacy for Kids
Rural School and Community Trust
School Social Work Association of
America
South East Asia Resource Action
Center
Southwest Education Development
Laboratory
TASH - Equity, Opportunity, and
Inclusion for People with
Disabilities
Teacher Education Division of the
Council for Exceptional
Children
TESOL International Association
United Cerebral Palsy
United Church of Christ Justice &
Witness Ministries

State and Local Organizations

Abbott Leadership Institute – Newark,
New Jersey
Action Now – Illinois
Action Now– North Carolina
ACTION United

Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)
Alliance of Californians for
Community Empowerment
(ACCE)
Arkansas Community Organizations
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action
Network
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council –
Chicago
California Association for Bilingual
Education
Californians for Justice
Californians Together
California Latino School Boards
Association
Campaign for Quality Education
Center for the Future of Teaching and
Learning Coalition for
Educational Justice
Citizen Action of New York
Delawareans for Social and Economic
Justice
Educate Our State
Education Voters Pennsylvania
Grow Your Own Illinois
Inner City Struggle
Justice Matters
Legal Advocates for Children and
Youth
Montgomery County Education Forum
Parent-U-Turn
Parents for Unity
RYSE Center
San Francisco Teacher Residency
Texas Association of Chicanos in
Higher Education
Young Voices-Providence, Rhode
Island
Youth On Board – Somerville,
Massachusetts

Youth Together