



# LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS

*Testimony provided to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions*

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Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Alexander, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon on teacher preparation and Louisiana's ongoing commitment to place an effective new teacher in every classroom.

My name is Jeanne Burns, and I am the Associate Commissioner for Teacher and Leadership Initiatives for the Louisiana Board of Regents. The Board of Regents is a state agency that is responsible for a wide range of planning and policy-making activities and coordinates the work of our four public university systems. As you will see in my testimony, our state leaders, university campuses, private providers, and many state partners truly understand that "Teacher Preparation Matters."

We are a State where committed stakeholders have come together and supported the work that Congress wanted states to do with the previous reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Our efforts to improve teacher preparation in Louisiana began in 1999-2000 and have been sustained and further expanded across three Governors (Governor Bobby Jindal, Former Governor Kathleen Blanco, and Former Governor Mike Foster), three Commissioners of Higher Education (Commissioner Jim Purcell, Former Commissioner Sally Clausen, and Former Commissioner E. Joseph Savoie), and three State Superintendents (State Superintendent John White, Former State Superintendent Paul Pastorek, and Former State Superintendent Cecil Picard). It has been supported by members of our Board of Regents and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. It has also been supported by our university chancellors/presidents, vice chancellors, college of arts/sciences and education deans, colleges of arts/sciences and education faculty, PK-12 school partners, private providers, parents, business partners, and community partners. The success we are experiencing today would not have occurred without this broad based support.

Our work began by creating a Blue Ribbon Commission for Teacher Quality that was composed of 36 stakeholders representing the partners I have already discussed. The Commission identified 70 recommendations during the first year it met in 1999-2000 to improve teacher quality and identified 40 additional recommendations in 2000-2001 to improve educational leaders.

The State used the Commission's recommendations to successfully obtain a \$3.2 million Title II Teacher Quality State Enhancement Grant from the U.S. Department of Education to

implement systemic reforms from 2000-2005 that impacted all public and private university teacher preparation programs in Louisiana. This was a wise investment of federal funds toward the improvement of teacher preparation in Louisiana.

Through the use of these and matching funds, Louisiana embarked upon Teacher Preparation Transformation 1.0 that impacted public universities, private universities, and private providers who offered teacher preparation programs. Our state boards created and implemented rigorous state policies for teacher licensure and higher expectations for teacher preparation approval. All public and private universities created redesign teams that included college of education faculty, college of arts/sciences/humanities faculty, and K-12 school/district partners to redesign all undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs. National experts were used to evaluate all redesigned programs to ensure that high state and national expectations were being met. During the evaluation, some university programs were not recommended for approval, and some universities voluntarily chose to no longer offer programs in specific certification areas for they lacked the strength needed to be approved through the evaluation process. This self-evaluation eliminated very weak programs.

All redesigned programs that met the more rigorous state expectations were approved by the Board of Regents and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for implementation, and all pre-redesign programs were terminated by specific dates. This process occurred during the time period of 2001-2010.

During 2002-2005, Louisiana created and implemented a Teacher Preparation Accountability System that used multiple measures to examine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and assigned five labels based upon performance. Labels of “at-risk” and “low-performing” were assigned to three institutions and all three demonstrated improvements during the next two years for the labels to be removed. A need developed to revise the system after Hurricane Katrina, and ongoing discussions have occurred about changing the system as new data have become available.

Researchers from Louisiana were instrumental in helping the State develop and use data that linked growth of learning of children to new teachers to their teacher preparation programs. Dr. George Noell from Louisiana State University developed a Louisiana Value-added Teacher Preparation Assessment Model that was piloted from 2003-2006 and fully implemented from 2006-2011. Value-added results for redesigned programs were reported to the public, and teacher preparation programs were provided drill-down data that helped them to identify the specific grade spans, subject areas, and content strands where their programs were demonstrating strengths and relative weaknesses for program improvement. Redesigned programs that performed below the average performance of other teacher preparation programs were required to develop plans to improve within specific time periods or lose approval of their programs.

Dr. Noell’s expertise was used by the Louisiana Department of Education to create a new value-added model that is now being used as part of a state teacher evaluation system for all teachers in Louisiana. In 2011, a decision was made by higher education to adopt the

value-added model being used for all teachers instead of using the original value-added model developed for teacher preparation. That is the value-added model that we are now using and reporting to the public.

I have shared what we have done to demonstrate that you do have states where universities and private providers have been actively engaged in improving the effectiveness of new teachers. There are other states and institutions that have worked equally as hard. This has been complicated and very challenging work; however, data now exist in our state to show that our systemic reforms have had a positive impact upon needs that were originally identified in 1999-2000. This is true for all of our institutions, including our historically black colleges and universities. As examples, all public and private universities in Louisiana are now nationally accredited, and all but one university have 100% passage rates on state licensure assessments. Public opinion has improved and principals have indicated that new teachers completing redesigned programs are better prepared than previous teachers. Data now exist to show that children taught by new teachers who completed redesigned programs have demonstrated greater growth in learning in more content areas and at more universities than growth in learning that occurred in pre-redesign programs in 2005-06. Based upon the state's new value-added model, more new teachers have obtained value-added scores in the "Effective Proficient" and "Highly Effective" ranges than anticipated.

At the present time, our data indicate that we do not have universities or private providers where entire teacher preparation programs need to be shut down. Instead, we now know that we have specific grade spans and specific content areas where growth of student learning is not as great as other content areas and grade spans at each institution. Our campuses are now working to create programs where all grade spans and all content areas are equally strong.

Louisiana's work is not yet done. Teacher preparation programs in Louisiana are now identifying new needs that are different than the needs that existed in 1999-2000 and embarking upon Teacher Preparation Reform 2.0. These needs include the development of greater collaboration between universities and school districts to create higher quality clinical experiences and residency programs, provision of in-depth instruction to prepare new teachers to address college- and career-ready standards, creation of a coherent system that blends multiple systems currently being used to evaluate teacher preparation programs, and communication of accurate information about teacher preparation programs to the public. You can learn more about Teacher Preparation Transformation 1.0 and 2.0 by going to a web site we have developed that provides access to the resources we have created or used (<http://regents.la.gov/onestopshop>).

Louisiana has already started to implement new initiatives to address Teacher Preparation Transformation 2.0. Through a Core to College grant from the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, universities are developing a deeper understanding of the Common Core State Standards and PARCC assessments and identifying changes that need to be made in teacher preparation programs to prepare new teachers who effectively address college- and career-ready standards. Louisiana is one of seven states that received a Network for

Transforming Education Preparation (NTEP) grant from the Council for Chief State School Officers, and we are using the grant to identify future changes to state licensure for teachers, additional changes for the approval of teacher preparation programs, and relevant data to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Once again, authentic stakeholder engagement is going to be critical for these reforms to continue to be sustained across multiple administrations.

An important lesson we have learned is that there is not one single way to improve teacher preparation programs. When our Commission first met to develop its initial recommendations, it heard from experts who were engaged in successful reforms in other states. The Commission used the lessons learned in other states to identify what would work best in our own State. States need to have the flexibility to create teacher preparation reforms that will be supported by their stakeholders. They then need to be held accountable for successfully implementing reforms that have a positive impact upon the learning of children in their states.

The Higher Education Act has had an important role in moving states in the direction of collecting data about their programs for accountability purposes and reporting the results to the public. A clearer understanding now exists in our state regarding the types of traditional and alternate teacher preparation programs being offered across the state, the number of teacher candidates enrolled in the programs, and the areas in which they are pursuing certification. The public now has direct access to accurate information about the passage rates of candidates within individual teacher preparation programs on state licensure assessments. However, many of the other indicators that institutions and states must now submit for Title II annual reporting are excessive and lack meaning due to different interpretations across institutions within states and across states. The process is extremely time consuming for individual campuses and time consuming for state agencies responsible for overseeing the collection of the data. Some of the data reported by institutions are included in the annual reports, but it is not clear what occurs with other data for it is not made available to the general public.

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is an important opportunity for Congress to make important changes that can have a positive impact upon all teacher preparation programs across all states.

Today I would like to share five recommendations.

**Recommendation 1: Expand investment in teacher quality innovation at campus and state levels.**

The Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants which were authorized in the 2008 Higher Education and Opportunity Act have provided individual teacher preparation programs with the opportunity to implement innovative ideas to improve the quality of their programs. Federal funding needs to be increased to support this innovation. In addition, federal funds need to be made available to higher education state agencies on a competitive basis for statewide innovation and reforms. This will help to stimulate and support

systemic reforms across a larger number of teacher preparation programs in a state. By sharing federal funds across institutions for the purpose of program improvement, competitiveness diminishes and collaboration increases as institutions share best practices to help improve all institutions in a state -- not just their own.

**Recommendation 2: Clearly identify a purpose for Title II reporting and align evidence with the purpose.**

A need exists to identify a clear purpose for the collection of data for Title II reporting. A need also exists to identify aspects of teacher preparation programs that are considered to be important across states. Clear indicators and measures need to be identified that are aligned with the purpose and aspects of teacher preparation that are identified as being important. As an example, passage of teacher licensure assessments appear to be an aspect of teacher preparation programs that is considered to be important for the current Title II annual reporting, and a process has been developed to collect licensure scores. If the purpose of the Title II reporting is to compare states, this is not a good measure for different states have different cut-off scores for licensure. If the purpose of the Title II reporting is to inform the public about different types of evidence across states, the measure would be appropriate for the purpose and address the aspect of teacher preparation that is considered to be important.

**Recommendation 3: Collect a concise but meaningful set of indicators for Title II reporting.**

Identify a common set of concise but meaningful indicators to report information to the public about traditional and alternate teacher preparation programs that are offered by public/private universities, private providers, and districts. Examples could include: passage rates on licensure assessments, impact of new teachers upon growth in student learning, performance of new teachers on state teacher evaluations, and national accreditation. Examples of indicators identified by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation that Louisiana is now developing a process to collect include the following: completer or graduation rates, percentage of completers that meet state licensing requirements, percentage of completers that obtain a license to teach, percentage of completers that are hired in schools, percentage of completers that are hired in positions for which they are prepared, retention of new teachers once hired, results of completer surveys, and results of employer surveys. As indicators are identified for Title II reporting, work needs to occur with organizations that report data (e.g., Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, National Council on Teacher Quality, etc.) to establish common metrics that can be used across organizations and Title II reporting.

**Recommendation 4: Allow states to create their own accountability systems.**

Set basic expectations, but allow individual states to create accountability systems that meet the needs of their states. As an example, instead of just requiring states to identify "At-Risk" and "Low-Performing" teacher preparation programs, establish the reporting of

performance at four or more levels. Set expectations that states will provide support to low performing programs and have states identify the types of support that will be provided. Have states clearly define all of the indicators that will be used to examine performance within their accountability system and how the indicators are aligned with the purpose of their system and the aspects of teacher preparation that they consider to be important in their individual states.

**Recommendation 5: Set clear expectation for active stakeholder engagement.**

As Title II funds are disseminated to states, clearly communicate the expectation that active stakeholder engagement must occur. Changes in policies, laws, and procedures should not occur in states without key stakeholders from the state, higher education, PK-12 education, and communities being involved in discussions that are open to the public. Stakeholder engagement is especially critical at the community level as universities, private providers, and PK-12 schools deepen their partnerships to provide meaningful clinical experiences to teacher candidates that are supported by effective experienced teachers. As states move toward comprehensive implementation of college- and career-ready standards, active sharing of information, resources, and expertise between PK-12 and higher education is more critical than ever before.

In conclusion, please know that Louisiana can be a resource to the Committee as policies are developed to improve teacher preparation across our country. Thank you again for allowing me to speak before your Committee today.