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Before the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

“Teacher Preparation: Ensuring a Quality Teacher in Every Classroom”

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Thank you Senator Harkin, Senator Alexander, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to participate in this Hearing.

Title II of the Higher Education Act, last amended in 2008, provides for teacher preparation program accountability through program and state reporting. The statute also requires states to set criteria for designating low performing or at risk preparation programs under their jurisdiction, and to report whether they have found any programs to be low performing or at risk of being low performing. Accountability functions of the statute are met through public disclosure of program information and listing by the state as low performing or at risk.

Through Title II of the HEA, the US Department of Education also makes grants to improve teacher preparation program quality. These awards take place through the Teacher Quality Partnership Program; multi-year grants were made most recently in FY 2009 and in FY 2010.

My remarks will address: (1) current preparation program accountability standards and reporting under Title II of the HEA, (2) how the Teacher Quality Partnership grants program contributes to program improvement across the country, and (3) ways to improve Title II of the HEA that can help states, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders to strengthen the quality of teacher preparation in the United States. Finally, these comments also describe how to reduce the reporting burden of Title II by focusing reporting and accountability on a relatively small number of key items.

K-12 Student Achievement, Preparation Program Quality, and Program Accountability

Two-thirds of all fourth graders in the United States are *not proficient* in reading. In mathematics, fifty-eight percent of all US fourth graders are *not proficient* according to the same 2013 test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

For eighth-grade students, 64% were not proficient in reading. The same proportion of our eighth graders was not proficient in mathematics.

And yet 96% of all teacher candidates in the country passed all of their teacher licensing tests in the most recent year for which test results are available.

The table below presents disaggregated NAEP results of grades 4 and 8 student performance in reading and mathematics.

Grade 4 Reading and Mathematics: Percent <i>NOT</i> Proficient on 2013 NAEP		
	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
All 4 <sup>th</sup> Graders	66%	58%
Black Students	83%	82%
Hispanic Students	80%	74%
White Students	55%	46%

Grade 8 Reading and Mathematics: Percent <i>NOT</i> Proficient on 2013 NAEP		
	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
All 8 <sup>th</sup> Graders	64%	64%
Black Students	83%	86%
Hispanic Students	78%	79%
White Students	54%	55%

Despite these student learning outcomes, the latest Title II report card indicates that 99% of all teacher candidates in the country passed their basic skills tests; 98% passed all of their professional knowledge tests; and 96% passed their academic content tests.

This disconnect between the performance of our young people in core subject areas and the performance of their teachers on tests required for licensure and certification is one of the basic failures of the current Title II accountability requirements for teacher preparation programs.

Another problem with the current Title II HEA reporting and accountability system is that few states make any effort to flag and report weak programs as low performing. The Title II HEA statute calls on states to “conduct an assessment to identify low-performing ... teacher preparation programs in the State and to assist such programs through the provision of technical assistance. Each such State shall provide the Secretary with an annual list of low-performing

teacher preparation programs and an identification of those programs at risk of being placed on such list..." The Title II statute goes on to specify that "Levels of performance shall be determined solely by the State and may include criteria based on information collected pursuant to" the Title II reporting requirements.

For the most recent reporting year, 39 states did not classify even one teacher preparation program as low performing or at risk of low performance. In fact, 35 states have *never* found a program to be low performing or at risk, despite the K-12 student performance issues shown in the tables above.

Among the other 11 states, 38 programs were identified as low performing or at risk in 2011. This number represents 1.8% of the 2,124 preparation programs in the country.

Apart from not looking carefully at the performance of teacher education programs whose graduates are allowed to obtain licenses and teach in the state, and in light of the data presented above on student learning outcomes, the fact that 35 states have never found a program in need of improvement also suggests that they are not doing enough to help programs and their graduates to be as effective as possible in meeting important state education needs.

If programs that prepare our nation's teachers are not held accountable in a meaningful way for the inability of their graduates to teach K-12 students do mathematics and learn to read, it is hard to see how the country can help these students to become productive and successful members of our society.

### Teacher Quality Partnership Grants

In an effort to promote innovation and quality improvement in teacher preparation programs, the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Amendments (HEA) also established competitive grant programs.

In recent years, the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) program funded two rounds of awards. In FY 2009, twenty-eight grants were made for a total of \$43 million. And in FY 2010, the US Department of Education awarded twelve grants totaling \$100 million. The statutory focus areas for these grants include: improving student achievement, improvements to the quality of prospective and new teachers by strengthening both teacher preparation and professional development; holding preparation programs accountable for training high quality teachers; and recruiting highly qualified prospective teachers into the profession.

These awards have been made to universities, to a state department of education, to a national STEM teaching initiative, and to three school districts. Many of the projects have multiple university and local LEA partners. Almost half of the TQP grants support “residency” programs that place teacher candidates in extended learning experiences in school settings for as long as a full year.

The forty funded TQP projects embrace a wide range of preparation strategies and subject areas. The most common subject areas addressed by the grantees are special education, one or more of the STEM subjects, and preparing new teachers to work with English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual K-12 students. One project appears to have a central focus on reading instruction. Others address teachers for all grades, recruiting prospective teachers in rural areas or from community colleges in rural areas, and early childhood education.

Through the work of these 40 grantees and their local partners, the TQP program is being used for teacher preparation program changes. University faculty and others involved in these 40 TQP grants are making good faith efforts to improve the preparation and support of teacher candidates who enroll in their programs.

However, it is hard to see much impact on teacher preparation in the United States from the program itself or from these individual efforts. There are two main reasons for this limited impact:

- The wide range of TQP objectives and implementation strategies dilutes the overall ability of the grant program to foster promising strategies and test their effectiveness in multiple settings. Despite a long list of objectives and activities that grantees are required to address, the program does not have an explicit focus on content areas like reading or mathematics where the nation’s students are clearly in need of stronger instruction.
- There is no common evaluation framework for the non-residency grant projects, a reflection of how different they are from one another. While the TQP residency grants are being evaluated in the same way (by the Institute of Education Sciences at the US Department of Education), evaluation is aimed at producing mostly information like program characteristics, and demographic characteristics of participants enrolled in the program. The one analytical component of this assessment concerns the persistence rates in teaching of those who complete the residency programs.

Both problems could be remedied by a competitive program that targets funding for teacher preparation program redesigns that address a small number of topics, support grantees in several locations who do the same kind of work (e.g., like multi-site trials), and evaluate the projects using the same set of measures.

### Title II of HEA as a Resource to Strengthen Preparation Program Quality and Accountability

A good starting point to improve the impact of Title II on program quality and accountability is to reduce the reporting burden on states and programs imposed by the existing statute and regulations. Too many current reporting elements are not central to understanding the preparation, production, and performance of strong teachers. And too little attention is given to reporting information about key program outputs and outcomes that affect the learning performance of K12 students.

Secretary Duncan reported in 2011 that there were more than two thousand teacher preparation programs in the country. A noted scholar of this field wrote: “There is so much variation among all programs in visions of good teaching, standards for admission, rigor of subject matter preparation, what is taught and learned, character of supervised clinical experience, and quality of evaluation that compared to any other academic profession, the sense of chaos is inescapable” (Lee Shulman, Stanford University, 2005).

Since there is so little overlap between programs, collecting purely descriptive information about them gives states, program leaders, and the public few analytical tools to understand program impact on the production and classroom success of well-prepared new teachers. Reporting that focuses on a small set of key items that relate to program quality can help policymakers and the public know when and why a program is good. Instead of what is collected today, the Title II reporting system should concentrate on:

- The academic strength of candidates admitted to the program through information on GPA and ACT/SAT scores.
- Demographic characteristics of those who are admitted to the program, and similar data for those who complete the program to gauge the extent to which program enrollments and graduates reflect the diversity of the schools they serve.

- The proportion of teacher candidates in the program who obtain at least 50% of supervised student teaching experience in schools that are high need and also high functioning.
- The number and percent of graduates prepared as teachers in high-need subject areas as defined by the state where the program is located.
- The number and percent of graduates who are employed as teachers in high-need schools and subject areas, and the number and percent of these teachers who persist in teaching for 1-5 years after program completion.
- A teacher effectiveness measure that captures the extent to which program graduates help their K-12 students to learn.
- Classroom teaching performance for program graduates that is measured by reliable and valid assessments of teaching skills, student engagement and student learning.
- Survey results from preparation program graduates and from their employers about how well the program prepares its graduates to teach; the report should include survey response rates.

The value and validity of measures like these for program improvement and accountability has been affirmed recently by an American Psychological Association (APA) task force of educators and measurement experts. Similar program data are at the heart of the revised standards for program accreditation adopted in 2013 by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

While reporting some of this information may be a heavy lift for some programs without external support in data collection and analysis, numerous recent efforts at state and other levels provide important resources for programs and states. Through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), at least seven states have embarked on comprehensive reforms to teacher licensure and program approval standards, work that will assist programs in those states with reporting and improvement strategies. Race to the Top grants in at least eleven states include development of preparation program quality indicators and reporting systems to support their use. Forty-seven states have received data system improvement grants through the federal Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program. Within the states, organizations such as the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Advancement of Teacher Education (CREATE), which

provides data collection and analysis services to more than fifty university preparation programs in Texas, can be tapped as program resources for high quality reporting.

Beyond these resources for better reporting on teacher preparation, Section 208 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), passed by the Congress in 2008, authorized state agencies to share “any and all pertinent education related information” with teacher preparation programs that “may enable the teacher preparation program to evaluate the effectiveness of the program’s graduates or the program itself.”

### Incentives for States to Use the Same Indicators and Accountability Tools

Engineering, accountancy, nursing, and medicine are among the professions that have uniform state accountability standards for programs and graduates. In each case, the profession worked closely with states to develop a single set of policies that apply everywhere and were adopted by each state under its own authority. These fields—including nursing with over 1200 program providers—also use the same licensing tests and passing scores for graduates in every state.

There are good reasons for thinking that this voluntary approach by these professions and the states can make a difference for teacher preparation program quality. A significant number of newly licensed teachers in the United States complete a preparation program in one state and obtain their initial license in another jurisdiction. Nationwide, 19% of *all* initial state credentials are issued to teachers prepared in another state. For ten states, over 40% of new teachers in each of these states are trained elsewhere and twenty-two states have reported that at least 20% of new teachers were prepared outside their state.

Title II of the HEA should provide incentives that encourage all states to adopt the same set of program quality and accountability indicators. One set of common standards would ensure that quality means the same thing no matter where the program is located or where the graduate is employed.

While there are understandable personal and geographic reasons for this cross-state pattern, it means that students and schools in many states *must depend on the policies and practices of a different state* to make sure their teachers are the best possible instructors. The Title II reporting system would give states better tools for preparation program improvement if it also specified that all states should use the same measures for designating low performing or at risk programs.

Consistent use of the same indicators across states for program reporting and accountability means that these policies and practices would be built on a set of clear signals about program quality that policymakers can understand and program faculty can use in their own work. For guidance on how this approach can work effectively, Congress and the states can look to the experience of other well-respected professions. This strategy protects the public through the same set of rules in every state and it brings higher levels of public respect for the profession as a whole and for those in the profession who serve the public through their work.

### Final Comments

Now is a promising time to accelerate progress on teacher preparation program reform and accountability. States, national organizations, and programs themselves are working to improve the preparation of teachers for our nation's students, seeking ways to push weak programs to get better or get out of the business of teacher education, and finding stronger ways to measure program and teaching quality. Reports on K-12 learning outcomes show that we must do much more to ensure a quality teacher in every classroom. Title II of the HEA can be an effective vehicle for this goal.

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Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.