



October 19, 2009

The Honorable George Miller  
2205 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Miller,

The California Teacher Corps agrees with the House Education and Labor Committee that improving the distribution of effective teachers in hard-to-staff, high-poverty schools should be a top federal priority. The discussion regarding effective teacher preparation and teacher quality is one of utmost importance to the Teacher Corps as we address California's historic challenges to education, including impending teacher shortages and the critical need, and retention of, highly-qualified teachers in our public schools.

The California Teacher Corps is a new, statewide organization that represents, and advocates on behalf of, California's more than seventy alternative certification programs. As we begin to take a more active role in the state's efforts to improve public education, we appreciate the opportunity to share with you our thoughts on enhancing teacher preparation, as well as the recruitment and equitable distribution of highly-qualified and effective teachers. It is the position of the Teacher Corps that teachers from alternative certification programs are the best suited to serve our high need public schools.

It is important to our discussion to fully understand who is pursuing the alternate route pathway into teaching. Teachers from alternative certification programs are second-career professionals, and other content experts, who desire to serve their community and teach in public schools that are in greatest need. There is the common misconception that, because these teachers did not take a traditional route to the classroom, they are "underprepared" and "inexperienced." However, alternate route programs are placing highly skilled teachers in the classroom, especially in underserved communities. These teachers, who bring with them a wealth of life and professional experience, understand the community in which they serve and have the tools necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students. Our teachers are mature, diverse and committed teachers who choose to teach in our hard-to-staff schools. In fact, alternative certification programs boast high retention rates; after five years, more than 80 percent of our teachers are still on the job.

According to data released by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the school districts that hire teachers from alternative certification programs recognize their success in the classroom. School districts report that 90% of these teachers were as good as, or better, than other beginning teachers at their schools, especially in the areas of planning and implementing instruction (91%), classroom management (87%), and providing effective teaching strategies (89%). Additionally, more than 70 percent of school administrators would hire additional

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teachers from an alternative certification program. Perhaps most importantly, more than 80 percent of hiring school districts believe that alternative certification programs help to meet their need for teachers in critical shortage subject areas.

The original intent of alternate route to teaching programs was to increase the effectiveness of teachers by pairing theory and practice more closely together. While still an important goal of these programs, alternative certification programs have shifted their focus towards addressing California's teacher shortages and education challenges. Nimble enough to quickly meet the ever-changing needs of individual schools, school districts and the students they serve, California's alternative certification programs are able to address the growing need for highly-skilled teachers who are experts in the fields of math, science and special education. In fact, just last year 50 percent of California's math teachers came from our programs. Additionally, alternative certification programs are bringing underrepresented minorities into the teaching profession. For the 2008-2009 school year, more than half of all teachers placed were ethnic minorities.

As we increase our efforts to recruit a new generation of teachers in California, it is the position of the California Teacher Corps that we continue to recognize that highly-qualified teachers from alternative certification programs are the best suited to serve in our hard-to-staff, low performing and poverty-stricken schools, as well as filling teacher shortage needs. As we continue the discussion regarding the equitable distribution of effective teachers, we must ensure that teachers from alternative certification programs are able to serve the schools in greatest need.

Today, the Obama Administration is focusing its education initiatives on recruiting the best teachers for our children, including efforts to bring individuals from other professions into teaching. The Administration continues to express its overwhelming support for alternate route teacher preparation programs, especially as the Department of Education estimates the national need for 1.7 million new teachers by 2017. Recently, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan articulated the critical need for a new generation of talented and committed teachers to help close the achievement gap and transform the teaching profession.

Ultimately, we must remember that the right teacher makes all the difference. In California, our programs work to match the best teacher with the students who need them the most. The California Teacher Corps looks forward to working with you and the House Education and Labor Committee to guarantee that all children get the right and most effective teacher, regardless of the route taken into teaching.

We thank you for your leadership in education. Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Catherine Kearney, Ed.D  
President  
California Teacher Corps

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