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Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training

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Chairman Rokita, Ranking Member McCarthy, Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Hinojosa and
Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on the importance
of efforts to strengthen the teaching profession and the role of educator preparation.

On July 3, 1839, three young women enrolled in a new school of higher education in Lexington,
Massachusetts. This school was the first state-supported school dedicated to training teachers. This year
marks the 175th anniversary of the Normal School in Massachusetts.¹ Then, as now, teacher preparation
was a critical component in ensuring teachers could enter the classroom and be successful in their work
with students.

As we reflect on our long history of teacher education in Massachusetts, the present and future beg this
question: Will the experiences of teacher and principal candidates in our educator preparation programs
ensure these aspiring educators will be ready to promote college and career ready students?

Mission and Context

We seek to guarantee that educator preparation in Massachusetts will result in effective educators
ready to support the success of all students. We believe preparation should not be strictly about pre-
service; we need to structure the first few years on the job as a continuation of preparation through
apprenticeships, induction programs and the continued involvement of higher education. As a point of
reference, it is important to consider some context about our state:

- Massachusetts enrolls just under 1 million students in nearly 400 districts across our Commonwealth.
- At present, there are 80 “sponsoring organizations” that manage educator preparation programs for principal and teacher candidates. These 80 sponsoring organizations include the traditional university-based programs as well as alternative programs.
- These 80 sponsoring organizations run over 1,800 programs of preparation. A number of institutions, like Bridgewater State University, one of our largest producers, run multiple programs from early childhood undergraduate programs to graduate programs in various high school license areas.

¹ Source: <http://www.framingham.edu/henry-whittemore-library/archives-and-special-collections/150-years-in-framingham/our-history.html>

- Per regulations and statute² the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is responsible for reviewing and approving programs. In approving programs, ESE authorizes sponsoring organizations to endorse candidates for both initial and advanced levels of licensure.
- On average, sponsoring organizations endorse approximately 6,600 candidates for various Massachusetts' licenses each year.
- When it comes to the balance of theory and practice, we would like to see even more emphasis and opportunities for candidates to have clinical experience (e.g., student teaching, practicum).

Building a Comprehensive System

Massachusetts has been building a comprehensive system of educator effectiveness policies to promote educator efficacy at every step of an educator's career continuum, from pre-service to in-service. As we develop state educator policy, we are increasingly focused on the importance of aligning the policies across this career continuum to build a comprehensive system to develop, recruit, hire, support and retain effective educators. We have to consider the fundamental question: Which policy and practice levers are going to be most impactful? For example, how will changes in licensure policy impact changes to educator preparation requirements? To fully leverage the opportunity to push for stronger accountability and greater support for educator effectiveness, these policies have to be inter-connected to build a comprehensive system of accountability and support to attain the goal of ensuring an effective educator in every classroom in Massachusetts, especially our highest-need classrooms and schools.

Much of our work in Massachusetts in the past three years has been supported by federal funding through the "Race to the Top" initiative. By far the biggest initiative is the implementation of a new Educator Evaluation system. In 2011, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted [new regulations](#) for the evaluation of all Massachusetts educators. This launched a massive statewide effort to implement a pioneering new model to document and evaluate educator performance and to provide meaningful feedback. In 2012-2013, Massachusetts' Race to the Top districts began implementing the new Educator Evaluation Framework. By 2014-2015, all educators in the Commonwealth, regardless of RTTT participation, will be evaluated under the new Educator Evaluation Framework.

The new Educator Evaluation Framework is designed to:

- Promote growth and development amongst leaders and teachers,
- Place student learning at the center, using multiple measures of student learning, growth, and achievement,
- Recognize excellence in teaching and leading,
- Set a high bar for professional teaching status, and
- Shorten timelines for improvement.

The Educator Evaluation Framework includes standards and indicators that outline the state's expectations for educator performance on a [Model Rubric](#). This is the first time the state has articulated expectations for educator performance along dimensions and ratings of practice from "Exemplary" to "Unsatisfactory." We are working now to align our educator preparation policies with the new Educator Evaluation Framework as well as other educator effectiveness policies.

² [Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval](#) (603 CMR 7.00), Massachusetts General Laws, [M.G.L Chapter 71, Section 38G](#)

Building a Comprehensive System for Educator Preparation

Massachusetts is building a comprehensive system to promote effective preparation of teachers and principals in our state, educators who will well-serve our students as soon as they enter the classroom.

This comprehensive system includes four components:

1. Standards and Accountability;
2. Investing local district stakeholders as critically important consumers;
3. Transparency of data and reporting;
4. Support.

These four foci come together to promote the continuous improvement of programs and to meet the goal of ensuring that educator preparation results in effective educators ready to support the success of all students.

Standards and Accountability

Standards

In June 2012, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved [new regulations](#) for educator preparation program approval.³ The regulations are intended to strengthen accountability by using the candidates' performance evaluation ratings data once they are teachers of record, employment data and survey data to determine whether the programs can continue to operate in the state. Together, the revised regulations and new [Program Guidelines](#) communicate a shift in the program approval process, a shift that includes program outcome measures. These outcome measures will indicate whether (or not) programs are preparing graduates who are ready to effectively teach and lead in the Commonwealth's schools; and whether (or not) programs are preparing educators to assume positions in high-needs placements across the Commonwealth.

Teachers in Massachusetts can achieve an initial license for five years provided they have completed an approved educator preparation program and passed the requirements of the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL). The tests include a subject test and a separate test which assesses teacher candidates' communication and literacy skills. Additionally, for the purpose of strengthening the mathematics content knowledge and skills of prospective elementary and special education teachers, a new Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) General Curriculum test with a separately scored mathematics subtest was developed and was administered for the first time on March 7, 2009.

In this comprehensive system we are building, we are aligning the educator preparation work to a re-engineering of our licensure policies as another strategy to drive improvement in preparation based on the needs of local school districts. In the next two years, we will be re-designing our licensure policies to promote a performance-based licensure system aligned with other educator effectiveness policies, including educator preparation. This work is being supported as part of the "Network for Transforming Educator Preparation" in collaboration with the Chief State School Officers.

³ [Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval](#) (603 CMR 7.00), Massachusetts General Laws, [M.G.L Chapter 71, Section 38G](#)

Accountability: New Program Review and Approval Process

We are currently developing a revised program review and approval process to build a robust evidentiary base for evaluation and decisions about program approval (or revocation). We will develop a solid evidentiary base undergirded by data from an offsite and an onsite review. This process will emphasize an outcomes-focused program review that leads to a summative evaluation. We are also building stronger definitions of at-risk, low performing and high performing programs and aligning those definitions with HEA Title II. To date, Massachusetts has not identified any program as low-performing. In order to make more differentiated decisions about program approval, we need to have a stronger evidence base with both input and outcomes data and a more transparent review process that invests both the educator preparation program and the local schools they serve as partners in the review.

The new program approval standards hold programs accountable for continuous improvement, collaboration with local school districts, program impact on those local school districts, program capacity, and their ability to deliver on the subject matter knowledge and pedagogical standards for candidates. Further, the new review and approval process will give us the opportunity to identify high-performing programs and to learn from them.

Investing K-12 Stakeholders as Consumers

Investing local schools and districts in educator preparation is critical to supporting the kinds of innovations that will ensure candidates are well-prepared to hit the ground running after they complete the programs. On a recent site visit during a review of a program, it was evident that some of the innovations in the preparation program had occurred as a result of a deep partnership with the local district. For example, the principal of the high school explained that he contacted a faculty member at the preparation program to invite him to teach his high school methods course in the high school (rather than in a classroom at the university). As a result of this invitation, the course is embedded in the routines of the high school and the pre-service teachers have the opportunity to observe other teachers and students in action, even as they learn the theories and methods to support their actions. According to the high school principal and to some of the pre-service candidates participating in the course, this fluidity between the practice and the theory has meant enormous benefit and substantial learning for them.

Another example of innovation took place in an elementary school. Instead of assigning the student-teacher candidates to one teacher for the whole year, the principal assigned student-teacher candidates to multiple classrooms and grade levels throughout the year. She reasoned that upon successful completion of the program, the state issues licenses in first through sixth grade. For them to only spend time in one elementary grade level before being placed in an entirely different one as a teacher of record would be a disservice to the candidate and to the students. These innovations in preparation were being driven by the needs of local districts and schools and the program was responding. This is the kind of work we hope to see continue in our state as a result of changes in expectations for the programs.

It is essential that local school districts are invested in educator preparation, as they are the primary consumers of the programs. Thus, ESE expects preparation programs to be responsive to the needs of the districts and schools both in terms of the supply-and-demand issues of districts as well as the content of the programs. We know from our analyses of our [Massachusetts educator workforce data](#) that program graduates usually search for teaching jobs very close to the program from which they graduated. In the new program regulations and standards of performance, there is a provision that requires educator preparation programs to demonstrate evidence of “deep, interactive partnerships

with K12 districts” and “recruitment, enrollment and employment that address the needs of districts.” (See regulations: [603 CMR 7.03](#)). In their annual reporting of data to ESE, educator preparation programs must report on the types of district partnerships and collaborations in which they are involved. The formal evaluation requires that they demonstrate that partnerships have improved outcomes for educator preparation candidates and PK-12 students.

In addition to the qualitative data, ESE will [report annually and publicly](#) on the employment data of program completers. These data include, among other elements, the percentage of program graduates employed in a Massachusetts public school within 1, 2, and 3-years of completion of the program and the percentage employed who stay for at least 2, 3 or 4-years. These data will help programs to know to what extent they are meeting the demand needs of local districts and to what extent their program graduates are being retained by the districts.

ESE will also conduct and publicly report on annual surveys of district personnel, including Human Resource directors and principals, to gather data on their level of satisfaction with the program graduates who have been hired as teachers and principals in their district. These data will catalyze programs and districts to not only analyze whether program graduates are well-serving the district, but also to begin to work together to make improvements and to promote innovation.

Transparency of Data and Reporting

Massachusetts has changed the types of data we collect from educator preparation programs. Where we used to only collect input data (e.g., syllabi, information about faculty), we are now collecting more outcomes data in addition to the input data. We are also better linking the available data from districts to educator preparation programs. For every preparation program in the Commonwealth, including the alternative providers, Massachusetts publishes an [Educator Preparation Program Profile](#). Massachusetts first released Educator Preparation Profiles in July 2013. These profiles appear on the Department of Education’s website, right alongside our district and school profiles, publicly accessible data to any consumer or program.

As part of our expectation for continuous improvement in the program and our commitment to using data to drive improvements, ESE collects and reports qualitative and quantitative program data. The qualitative data elements include program mission and annual goals. The quantitative data include data on program participants, such as: single and aggregate pass rates on the Massachusetts Test of Educator Licensure (MTEL) and pass rates by each of the assessments; summary pass rates on the MTEL at the point of enrollment, non-practicum completion and program completion. Additionally, we are very pleased to be linking educator workforce data and educator effectiveness data for the first time. These data elements include: program graduates’ educator evaluation ratings, program graduates’ impact in producing growth in student learning, employment and survey data. By analyzing the data from the programs along with other data such as school employment data and teacher evaluation results, the Department will be able to identify low- and high-performing programs and present the information to the public in a user-friendly, online format. With the collection and analysis of these data, ESE will be able to better identify strong programs worthy of recognition and replication and eliminate those programs failing to produce the types of educators required for the needs of Massachusetts’ schools.

Support

ESE is committed to supporting the educator preparation programs in their continuous improvement to well-prepare candidates and to well-serve our students. One way we do this is by providing the programs with easy-to-access analytic reports on a variety of program data. ESE built a powerful

reporting and data analysis tool we call “Edwin Analytics” that gives educator preparation programs and districts access to new information and should catalyze self-assessment. The available tools and reports for this data will help program staff make informed decisions about how and where they can improve upon their practices to provide an exceptional learning experience for their candidates. The Educator Effectiveness Reports for educator preparation programs, to be released within the next six months, will allow the organizations to answer questions such as:

- What are the enrollment, persistence, and completion trends for the cohort from an individual Prep Programs, as well as statewide?
- For a selected year, what is the pipeline of candidates by subject area?
- Where are completers finding employment in the state?
- How are completers performing in their Massachusetts educator evaluations? Is there any variance between programs and/or districts?
- Did candidates gain a license in the fields they were endorsed in? What other licenses did they gain?
- Do students find employment teaching subjects they were endorsed in?

The Federal Role

There is a critical role for the federal government in promoting effective educator preparation policy and practice. We appreciate your consideration of the following ideas:

Support and disseminate research on effective programs

The current research is limited in answering a number of questions about educator preparation, such as “Which components of educator preparation are most impactful when it comes to student growth and learning?” The federal government has a role in supporting and disseminating research on the practices and features of more effective teacher preparation programs, much in the same way that the federal government has supported the “What Works Clearinghouse” for best practices in local school and district work.

Title II Reporting: Reduce data elements, develop common metrics, and focus on the highest priority data

Presently, states like Massachusetts spend far too much time collecting meaningless data for Title II reporting purposes. There is little or no comparability across the states when reporting on these data elements as there are no common definitions or standards for the data elements. We need a stronger focus on the data elements that are most important and common definitions of these metrics so there is uniform reporting across the states. We also need strong outcomes measures as well as input measures. One example of a meaningful input measure might be for states to report on the regulations governing the amount of time required for candidates to be in classrooms. Examples of strong outcomes measures include program completer survey data or measures of program completers’ impact on students using multiple measures. We would like to see data collection that explores the connections between the inputs and the outcomes. The key is defining what counts as important, such as the state requirements for the number of practicum hours or hours in classrooms; or the background of the clinical staff who supervise, such as what percentage of the faculty have taught in the past 10 years.

Provide federal subsidies to establish “teaching hospital schools” to build innovative models of preparation

We are presently lacking the capacity for bridging the gap between preparation in higher education and clinical preparation; we need structures that can help to provide high-quality clinical training while partnering with higher education and local school districts. The federal government currently provides

subsidies to teaching hospitals to train interns and residents. Without this federal subsidy, some hospitals might not take on the expensive work of training the next generation of doctors. The federal government could reallocate funding to establish “teaching hospital schools” in major urban areas that would be a) centers for high quality clinical training for teachers serving low-income students or low-performing schools; b) host applied research to promote a quality improvement process driven by practical and useful research and data embedded in the work; c) forge partnerships between local districts and teacher preparation programs, including traditional and alternative program providers that meet certain criteria; d) partner with other schools to build capacity to support high quality field training.⁴

Conclusion

We urge all stakeholders engaged in the preparation of future educators to embrace this opportunity to create experiences for educator candidates to ensure the success of all students in our nation. We believe Massachusetts’ efforts to transform educator preparation will yield fruit in providing meaningful feedback for the continuous improvement of all programs. In Massachusetts, we are banking on the combination of new program review and approval standards; better and more accessible statewide data; a stronger accountability process for review and approval; and a commitment to investing local school and district stakeholders in improving educator preparation. We are encouraged by the interest and commitment of the federal government in supporting this critical work.

⁴ This recommendation came out of conversations with Jesse Solomon and Edward Liu, senior leaders at the Boston Teacher Residency Program (www.bostonteacherresidency.org), an alternative program provider.