

Proponent Testimony for SB168
Primary and Secondary Education Committee
6/25/2024

Dr. Richard Murrary, Executive Director, Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools

Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Fowler-Aurthur, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee;

Thank you for reviewing my written testimony today. On behalf of our member superintendents I wish to share with you the following list of licensure related provisions the Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools supports within Senate Bill 168, particularly during such dire workforce deficits:

- Allow a temporary nonrenewable license permitting districts to employ educators with out-of-state credentials for up to a year,
- Permit individuals with bachelor's degrees to receive professional administrator or alternative superintendent licenses,
- Ease an existing requirement that applicants for senior or lead professional educator licenses have at least a master's degree,
- Allow school districts to employ an individual with a master's degree in relevant subject matter but no educator's license as a teacher.

Rural and Appalachian districts are suffering from a notable lack of applicants for open positions. When this happens, we have to work with the limited applicants we do have and trusted members of our community to fill workforce gaps; even if those individuals do not meet the cookie-cutter definition of a Dept. of Education & Workforce "Highly Qualified Teacher." Often, we have candidates who have obtained a four-year degree or higher level of education and are working toward obtaining official DEW licensure, such as: first year teachers actively taking examinations, individuals retaking failed licensure examinations, individuals with higher education in a different field of study taking licensure examinations to enter the profession, individuals who are licensed out-of-state and awaiting in-state licensure approval, or were previously licensed in Ohio and are undergoing recertification.

We recognize there must be alternative pathways to the profession and that our administrations must play an active role in the professional development of these teachers. As superintendents, our members are committed to ensuring our staff are the best that they can be for our kids, and we are committed to developing any and all staff members professionally – regardless of where they started.

These requested changes would allow districts to get candidates with some, but not all, qualifications into the room to fill unacceptable educator gaps, provide them with mentorship and professional development training, and help them through the process of becoming properly licensed, highly qualified teachers. We are asking the state to meet our districts where we are. If no action is taken we will continue to watch as workforce gaps manifest into learning loss for this generation of K-12 students

CORAS appreciates your consideration on this important matter, and hope you will reach out to our members should you have any questions about our workforce needs. Thank you.