



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE

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DISTRICT 47

Counties:

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Part Independence

Part White

Woodruff

COMMITTEES:

Education

Higher Education Subcommittee

City, County and Local Affairs

Local Government Personnel

Subcommittee

Vice Chairperson,

Joint Committee on Advanced

Communications and Information

Technology

February 3, 2016

Mr. Johnny Key, Commissioner
Arkansas Department of Education
Room 304-A
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Commissioner Key:

We, members of the Arkansas House Education Committee, are writing to express our reservations, both philosophical and procedural, concerning the Arkansas Department of Education's (ADE) proposed revisions to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Rules, which are currently out for public comment. As you are well aware, the proposed revisions have generated a great deal of comment and concern from our state's educators who have undertaken the daunting process of becoming National Board Certified. These educators have, by their deeds, proven their interest in becoming the best teachers they can be. Unfortunately, instead of communicating our respect and appreciation for their efforts, many of these individuals perceive the proposed revisions as the exact opposite.

Having reviewed the information regarding the rationale for the proposed changes provided to the members of the General Assembly by your staff, it appears to us that your agency is attempting by regulatory action to make changes to the statutes concerning the National Board Certification that should be made through the legislative process. As a former member of the General Assembly, you understand the concerns that this perceived course of action raises with regard to the Separation of Powers doctrine and the appropriations process.

In addition, this latest proposal seems to be a continuation of the disturbing trend of devaluing the efforts of educators to improve their knowledge and skills, which ultimately benefits the student of our state's public schools. As Picus and Odden noted on Page 47 of their September 2014 *Desk Audit of the Arkansas School Funding Matrix*:

Effective teachers are the most influential factor in student learning (Rowan, Correnti & Miller, 2002; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997) and more systemic deployment of effective instruction is key to improving student learning and reducing achievement gaps (Odden, 2011a; Raudenbusch, 2009). All School faculties need ongoing professional development. Improving teacher effectiveness through high quality professional development is arguably as important as all of the other resource strategies identified.

By enacting and providing funding for the National Board Certification stature, the State of Arkansas was by word and deed signaling the importance of enhanced professional learning and growth. Unfortunately, the proposed revisions to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Rules are the latest signal that the state is retreating from its past commitments to these important educational goals.

We would encourage the State Board of Education and the ADE to withdraw the proposed revisions to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Rules and instead bring forward proposals for both statutory and fiscal legislation to address concerns the proposed revisions attempted to address for consideration in the upcoming Fiscal Session or a Special Session.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to discussing this letter and its contents with you at your earliest convenience.

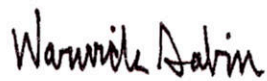
Sincerely,



Michael John Gray
State Representative
District 47



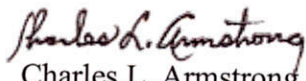
Charlotte Vining Douglas
State Representative
District 75



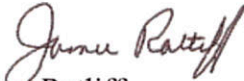
Warwick Sabin
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State Representative
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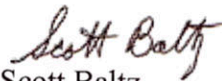
Charles L. Armstrong
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State Representative
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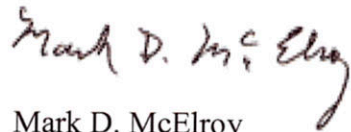
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District 48



Mark D. McElroy
State Representative
District 11

cc: Members of the State Board of Education