



ATPE Input on Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

February 23, 2018

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** is a member-owned, member-governed professional association with more than 100,000 members, making it the leading educator association in Texas and the largest independent association for public school educators in the nation. ATPE appreciates this opportunity to offer the following input on reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), particularly as it relates to Title II programs pertaining to educator recruitment, training, and retention.

ATPE has made educator training and preparation a primary focus of our advocacy efforts. We recognize that it is a disservice to educators and students when ill-prepared educators are placed in the 21st century classroom and expected to achieve excellence. Educator training that is held to high expectations and standards plays a vital role in ensuring every student has access to a well-prepared, productive educator. It also has a lasting impact on retaining those strong educators in the classroom.

ATPE's advocacy on these issues is based on the strong, evidence-backed belief that all educator candidates deserve quality training and support prior to full certification. Research consistently shows that access to a high-quality teacher is the most important in-school factor leading to a student's success. Based upon studies that look at educator recruitment and training policies in countries demonstrating the most international success in student achievement, we know that the United States, certainly including Texas, imposes less selective entrance requirements on its educator candidates and requires less classroom and clinical training of candidates prior to their entering the classroom as the teacher-of-record.

Programs like the Teacher Quality Enhancement program, TEACH grants, and loan forgiveness programs specific to educators are important HEA Title II programs that help attract strongly qualified candidates into the profession, prepare our educators in programs that are held to high standards of training, and retain our well-qualified and experienced teachers in the classrooms with students who need them most.

High standards for educator recruitment and training help ensure that prospective teachers acquire the background knowledge required to be successful in the classroom. This includes both knowledge of the subject matter to be taught and how to teach that content to a wide range of learners, along with the ability to manage a classroom, design and implement

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.

instruction, and work skillfully with students, parents, and other professionals. Unfortunately, although some recent regulatory efforts have moved our state in the right direction, Texas has not been a role model for the nation in this area. Our educator preparation program admission standards fall below national averages and beneath the thresholds recommended by many researchers. Also, several of our paths to certification focus too much on getting teachers in the classroom as quickly as possible and not enough on offering them the training and experience needed in the first place.

Initiatives focused on educator recruitment, preparation, and retention are vital pieces of the overall landscape that supports student success in the classroom. The bill advanced by your House counterpart, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, is concerning because it would eliminate Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA), where the federal programs identified above are housed. The federal government should maintain its role in supporting states that implement these valuable programs for the students and schools that need high-quality and experienced educators the most, especially when challenges continue with regard to recruiting and retaining classroom educators throughout the country.

Thank you for considering the above input as the committee continues its work to reauthorize the HEA. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.