

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 635

(Washington County Senators)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

**State Board of Education and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education
Board - Alternative Teacher Certification Program**

This bill requires the State Board of Education, the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB), and at least two local school systems to consider and, if appropriate, develop an alternative teacher certification program for areas of the State experiencing a critical teacher shortage. The local school systems must be selected by the State Superintendent of Schools; one must be from a rural area and one from an urban area. By December 1, 2015, the State Board of Education must report the results of the consideration and, if appropriate, the development of a program to the General Assembly.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Education, PSTEB, and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) can consider and, if appropriate, approve an alternative teacher certification program using existing resources. This estimate assumes that the local school systems selected bear the costs of any alternative certification programs implemented, as is the case under current law. Public four-year institutions of higher education or Baltimore City Community College may choose to partner with a selected local school system to create an alternative certification program.

Local Effect: If a selected local school system decides to establish a program additional expenditures will be required. A local community college may choose to partner with a selected local school system to create an alternative certification program.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In considering whether there is a necessity to develop an alternative teacher certification program, the State Board of Education, PSTEB, and the local school systems must, at minimum, consider (1) criteria that ensure that teachers certified under the program have high quality skills while allowing flexibility in the required qualifications and (2) extending the period of validity of a conditional certificate for teachers who teach in recognized education shortage areas, including professional and technical education areas and less commonly taught world languages.

Current Law: Teachers, specialists, and administrators in Maryland public schools and in approved schools operated by State agencies must hold a valid certificate appropriate to the field of employment.

According to COMAR, certification may be obtained in one of the following ways:

- completing a college or university State-approved educator preparation program;
- holding a valid, out-of-state professional certificate and submitting verification of 27 months of full-time satisfactory professional experience;
- meeting transcript analysis requirements; or
- completing a Resident Teacher Certification (RTC) program.

RTC is Maryland's alternative route to teacher certification in Maryland. Since January 2007, all providers who train teachers to receive an RTC must be approved by MSDE and must be designated to meet the individual needs of the participating local school system. An RTC applicant must (1) have a bachelor's degree with a concentration in an area appropriate for the teaching assignment; (2) have earned grades of B or better in the major area of study; (3) present qualifying scores on teacher certification tests; and (4) have verification by the local superintendent of schools that the applicant completed a minimum of 90 clock hours of study in a resident teacher program developed according to MSDE guidelines. Additional clock hours of study, the completion of a residency with supervision by a supervising teacher or mentor, and satisfactory teaching performance qualify a resident teacher for a standard professional certificate. An applicant who holds an RTC must be eligible for a standard professional certificate upon receipt by MSDE of all of the following items: (1) completion of an approved alternative program; (2) a qualifying score on the applicable MSDE-approved pedagogy test; and (3) satisfactory teaching performance during the residency period.

In addition, a local school system may request that MSDE grant an individual a Conditional Teacher Certificate if the school system is unable to fill a position with a qualified person who holds a professional certification. To be issued a Conditional Teacher Certificate, an

applicant hired by a local school system, must hold a bachelor's or higher degree from an institution of higher education but does not need to meet the requirements for a professional certificate. An applicant in a career and technology education area that does not require a bachelor's degree may be issued a Conditional Teacher Nondegree Certificate without a bachelor's degree.

Regular professional certificates are valid for five years, while RTC and Conditional Teacher Certificates are only valid for two years. An RTC cannot be renewed. A Conditional Teacher Certificate may be reviewed once (for two years) if the applicant has met specified requirements.

In addition, the State Superintendent of Schools has the authority to waive the specific requirements for a certificate (except for teacher certification tests) in an individual case if the State Superintendent determines that the applicant's preparation and/or experience are adequate to justify a waiver.

An "alternative teacher preparation program" is defined as a program established by a local board of education and approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

The State Board of Education and PSTEB develop for consideration rules and regulations for (1) the certification of teachers and other professional personnel, except for social workers, employed by a local school system and (2) requirements for preparation of teachers and other education personnel. Rules and regulations developed by the State Board of Education must be reviewed by PSTEB; likewise, rules and regulations developed by PSTEB must be reviewed by the State Board of Education. Rules and regulations initiated by either the State Board of Education or PSTEB and submitted for review to each other must be acted upon within 60 days of their receipt by the other party.

Recommendations on rules and regulations that are initiated by PSTEB must be implemented unless disapproved by three-fourths of the members of the State Board of Education. Recommendations on rules and regulations that are initiated by the State Board of Education must be implemented unless disapproved by PSTEB. If the rules and regulations are disapproved, the rules and regulations must be implemented if they are approved by three-fourths of the members of the State board.

Background: Alternative preparation programs differ from traditional programs in that alternative preparation leads to teacher certification, but not necessarily to a degree. Alternative preparation programs allow an individual to begin teaching and receiving a salary earlier in a program, and they usually cost much less than traditional routes. However, given the modified timeframe, alternative preparation programs are considered intensive and very challenging. One of the most well-known alternative programs is Teach for America.

MSDE has implemented several options for certifying potential teachers who are career changers since 2005, including the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program (MAAPP) under the RTC program described under COMAR. MAAPP's purpose is to assist local school systems to fill hard-to-staff positions within its schools.

As of April 2014, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties and Baltimore City had active MAAPPs. Washington County does not have any. Most programs are in partnership with two-year or four-year colleges or other private education providers. Under MAAPP, local school systems produce teachers in specified classification areas.

State Fiscal Effect: This estimate assumes that the local school systems selected bear the cost of any alternative certification program implemented, as is the case under current law. The State Board of Education, PSTEB, and MSDE can consider and, if appropriate, approve an alternative teacher certification program, which is also allowed under current law and COMAR using existing resources.

Local Expenditures: This estimate assumes that the local school systems selected bear the cost of any alternative certification program implemented, as is the case under current law. Thus, if a selected local school system decides to establish a program additional expenditures will be required. There is no data readily available on the cost of establishing an alternative teacher certification program; thus, it is unknown how much such a program will cost.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 790 (Washington County Delegation) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2015
min/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - April 13, 2015

Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510