

Date of Hearing: March 22, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 681 (Chau) – As Introduced February 15, 2017

SUBJECT: Teacher credentialing: teacher preparation outside of the United States

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to determine whether the national teacher credential standards in foreign countries is equivalent to California teacher credentialing standards, in order to expedite the processing time for teacher credential applications from foreign countries. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes the CTC to determine that the national standards for coursework, programs, or degrees in a country other than the United States are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States; and, specifies if the CTC determines that the other country's national standards are equivalent, an individual who holds or is eligible for a credential in that country is presumed to have satisfied the California teaching credential requirements.
- 2) Authorizes the CTC to enter into an agreement with an evaluating agency as necessary to make a determination regarding another country's national standards.
- 3) Requires the CTC to adopt regulations, including regulations that do both of the following:
 - a) Establish uniform standards for making a determination regarding another country's national standards.
 - b) Prescribe the procedure by which a determination regarding another country's national standards shall occur.

EXISTING LAW authorizes individuals who have completed a teacher preparation program outside of the United States to apply to the CTC for a credential; requires the CTC or an evaluating agency approved by the CTC to determine that the institution's coursework, programs, or degrees are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States; and, expresses Legislative intent that if an individual is deemed to have equivalent coursework and meets specified requirements, that individual shall be granted a five year preliminary teaching credential. (Education Code Section 44275.4)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: This bill allows the CTC to determine whether a country has academic and credentialing standards equivalent to those of regionally accredited institutions in the United States, and allows applicants from those countries to forego a foreign transcript evaluation by the CTC or an approved evaluator.

According to the CTC, "Foreign transcript evaluations require an additional investment of time and expense on the part of a teacher who wants to come to the United States and teach in a California school. Moreover, it increases their uncertainty as to whether or not coming to California is a viable option. These factors may combine to create an unnecessary disincentive to

recruiting qualified out-of-country educators to serve in California public schools. Many foreign countries have standards equal to or greater than the US: Singapore, Canada, South Korea, and Finland, for example, are all known to be producers of high quality teachers. If the CTC were authorized to examine national academic and credentialing standards and judge them to be equivalent to those of California, it would eliminate the additional time, uncertainty, and expense for teachers coming from these countries, while still allowing the CTC to examine teachers from non-approved countries on an individual basis."

According to the author, current law allows individuals who have completed a teacher preparation program outside of the United States to apply to the CTC for a credential on the basis of that preparation. In order to do so, the CTC or an evaluating agency approved by the CTC must determine that the institution's coursework, programs, or degrees are equivalent to those offered by a regionally accredited institution in the United States. The CTC currently has the authority to evaluate foreign transcripts and determine equivalence for credentialing purposes. However, the CTC or an approved evaluator does not have the authority to determine that a country has academic and credentialing standards equivalent to those of regionally accredited institutions in the United States; thus, allowing applicants from such a country to forego an individual foreign transcript evaluation by the CTC.

Teacher Shortage. School districts across the State of California are experiencing a serious shortage of qualified teachers. According to the Learning Policy Institute, increased demand for K–12 teachers in California comes at a time when the supply of new teachers is at a 12-year low. Enrollment in educator preparation programs has dropped by more than 70% over the last decade, and has fallen below the number of estimated hires by school districts around the state. It is estimated teacher hires for the 2015-16 school year increased by 25 percent from the previous year, while credentials issued to fully prepare new teachers increased by less than 1 percent from the previous year, and enrollment in teacher education programs increased by only about 2 percent. In light of the current teacher shortage, recruiting teachers from other countries could be a viable option for districts and this bill could make that process more streamlined.

Additional Considerations. While the CTC's goal is clear to make the process slightly easier to hire qualified teachers from foreign countries with high standards such as Canada and Finland, the committee should note that some California schools have recruited large numbers of foreign teachers with some controversy. According to an October 12, 2016 Los Angeles Times article, Magnolia Public Charter Schools "applied to bring in 138 teachers from abroad, almost all from Turkey, and 97 eventually worked for Magnolia. Thirty-seven still do. As required by law, Magnolia covered the visa-related costs, which it estimated at about \$3,000 per employee and chose to pay for the visas of spouses and children. L.A. Unified estimated the total cost of that effort at about \$929,000, according to Magnolia Chief Executive Caprice Young, the former L.A. school board president who took over Magnolia in 2015. Young said she ended the practice, though she has brought in a Chinese citizen to teach Chinese."

Committee Amendments: The committee should consider the following amendments:

- 1) Require the CTC to include in their annual report to the Legislature the number of foreign credentials approved and the country of origin.
- 2) Require school districts, county offices of education and charter schools to report to the California Department of Education the number of H1B visas they apply for and are granted on behalf of employees.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Catholic Conference, Inc.
EdVoice
Public Advocates, Inc.

Opposition

None on file

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