

Members of the Senate Education Policy and Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SF446. The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) oversees the state standards required to be a licensed teacher in Minnesota.

One of the Board's goals is to increase the number of licensed teachers of color and Indigenous teachers in Minnesota. Over the past few years, PELSB has supported the Increase Teachers of Color Act (ITCA) as a set of policy measures that work to advance this goal. Representatives from the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota have come to the Board table, as well as committee meetings, to discuss the alignment of Board goals with this legislation. The Board has continuously voted to formally support this legislation and believes the proposals included in this bill are needed to have a real impact on the number of teachers of color in Minnesota.

PELSB supports the Increase Teachers of Color Act in its entirety, and is a particularly strong proponent of the following measures:

- **State Goals and Reporting:** While PELSB continues to coordinate with the Department of Education and the Office of Higher Education on increasing and supporting teachers of color and Indigenous teachers, ITCA provisions would formalize this work and increase understanding of how state funding is meeting this goal.
- **Recruitment:** The percentage of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers has not significantly increased in Minnesota. ITCA's proposal to provide funding for district hiring bonuses would be a much needed additional draw for these teachers. Similarly, PELSB supports proposed funding for Grow Your Own programs and teacher preparation that focus, specifically, on supporting teacher candidates of color and Indigenous teacher candidates.
- **Removing Testing Barriers:** National research has shown that testing poses a barrier for many teachers of color and Indigenous teachers.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, PELSB has found that nearly 40 percent of teachers with a Tier 2 license have completed teacher preparation, thus meeting state standards, but do not qualify for a Tier 3 license simply because they cannot pass content and pedagogy exams. ITCA's proposal to remove testing requirements for educators that have completed teacher preparation maintains Minnesota's standards for high-quality educators while removing an unnecessary barrier to professional licensure.

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<sup>1</sup>Godwin, R.A. Establishing a Quality Literature Base: Barriers that African Americans Face in Becoming Teachers. *Urban Rev*, 50, 757–772 (2018); Goldhaber, D., & Hansen, M. Race, gender, and teacher testing: How informative a tool is teacher licensure testing? *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(1), 218–251 (2010).

- Mentorship: Data published in the biennial [Supply & Demand Report](#) reveals that retention remains one of the largest issues our state faces as it works to maintain a high-quality teacher workforce. This is especially true for teachers of color and Indigenous teachers. Legislatively mandated programs, such as the Teacher Mentorship and Retention of Effective Teachers Grant, have begun to rectify this. ITCA's proposal would ensure teachers of color and Indigenous teachers continue to receive the mentorship necessary to thrive in the profession.
- Curriculum: ITCA proposes changes in policy that allow teachers of color and Indigenous teachers to incorporate curriculum about historically underrepresented groups without fear of discrimination or discipline. This policy fosters greater investment and autonomy for teachers of color and Indigenous teachers, which aids retention.

Thank you for your consideration of this significant issue, and please reach out to PELSB for additional changes to Tiered Licensure that could forge additional pathways for more teachers and provide opportunities and supports to move up the tiers.

Sincerely,



Alex Liuzzi  
PELSB, Executive Director



Brian Rappe  
PELSB, Chair