

I hope this will be shared with all the members of the Joint Committee deliberating this proposed bill. By way of introduction, I am a relatively new Oregonian having relocated here (in 2011) after retiring from university service as a dean of Education schools and colleges at various institutions.

In section one of SB 78, the proposal is to guide the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission to allow graduate degrees in Education to include undergraduate coursework. I believe the intent is to provide students with the option of earning both an undergraduate and a graduate degree at the same but that is not clear. My concern is this: a master's degree should adhere to standards of scholarship and academic rigor that is different from undergraduate coursework (regrettably inconsistently practiced). Should the Commission have some guidelines (they could prepare them and have them sanctioned by the Legislature, for example) that provide some limits on the number of undergraduate courses and the type of undergraduate courses that would suffice for credit towards a graduate degree? I am most concerned about compromising academic integrity that, frankly, many schools/colleges of education are practicing. I don't think this allowance will enhance the quality of those graduate degrees in any way.

Furthermore, the purpose of the master's degree requires some attention. Is it for the purposes of certification for individuals seeking to become teachers after having earned a bachelor's degree in another field? Is it for already-certified and practicing teachers (often Elementary Education majors) seeking to enrich their understanding Child Development, Special Education, Math Education, Art Education? In the case of the pre-service master's degree seeker, I understand that the courses cover much of what they might have taken as undergraduates, but they should be taught at the master's level with expectations of academic work more sophisticated and intense (not quantity) than expected of undergraduates.

I do not see how undergraduate level courses are appropriate to issuing a master's degree.

The field of teacher education is fraught with complications that this legislation doesn't seem to acknowledge. I urge you to be cautious in passing legislation that doesn't promote better teacher education.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

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