



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**

Hank M. Bounds
Commissioner of Higher Education

March 5, 2013

The Honorable Phil Bryant
Governor of the State of Mississippi
P.O. Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

Dear Governor Bryant:

The IHL Board and I share your desire to raise standards and uphold rigor for teacher education candidates. This national focus and interest is supported by teacher education's new accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, who has recently released a new set of standards that include an emphasis of increased entrance requirements for teacher education candidates.

Although I support raising standards to put the best quality teachers in our classrooms, House Bill 890 or Senate Bill 2658 as currently worded will have unintended consequences.

- A. Without first addressing starting compensation, House Bill 890/Senate Bill 2658 will exacerbate the difficulties in recruiting high achieving students into the teaching profession.
- B. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College (SACSCOC) has a core requirement that the institutional governing board is the policy making body for institutions of higher learning (Core Requirement 2.2 Governing Board). The legislature setting university admission requirements compromises continuing accreditation of each institution.
- C. Approximately 40% of the teachers certified each year in the state of Mississippi complete alternative route certification. Any attempts to raise the quality of teachers should include all pathways to certification including alternate route certification (minimum GPA and ACT are not required for alternate route pathways). House Bill 890 does not include admission requirements for alternative route certification.

Governor Bryant

March 3, 2013

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Given the issues raised above, and in support of the intent of the bill to raise standards, I recommend modifying the language in the bill to raise licensure requirements rather than teacher education admission requirements and allow for an alternative measure for increasing standards. To that end, I recommend the language in the bill be amended as indicated below.

“(b) No teacher candidate shall be licensed to teach in Mississippi that did not meet the following criteria, including alternate route.

3.0 GPA on pre-major coursework and 21 ACT/SAT equivalent or

3.0 GPA on pre-major coursework and score at the national median score in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics on the Praxis I examination”

Without first addressing starting teacher compensation, the unintended consequence of this law will be a worsened teacher shortage. However, it will offer an additional pathway for community college and other students who work hard during their first two years of college.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hank M. Bounds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hank M. Bounds

Commissioner of Higher Education