

Assembly Bill 437

Subject Matter Teaching Credentialing

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

AB 437 expands the ways prospective teachers can demonstrate subject matter competency by allowing them to use higher education coursework and to mix-and-match coursework with California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) subtests.

BACKGROUND

California is facing a significant teacher shortage. As a result, there is a push to identify additional avenues for teaching candidates to obtain their credential while maintaining the rigorous standards of the credential itself.

California teacher credential candidates are required to demonstrate competency in the subject matter they plan to teach in order to fulfill their Subject Matter Requirement (SMR). Under current law, candidates can demonstrate competency in one of two ways: 1) pass the applicable CSET or 2) complete a Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) approved subject matter program as an undergraduate student.

Many teacher credential candidates have obtained undergraduate and higher degrees relevant to their subject matter. However, state law does not recognize completion of a higher education degree major itself as a way to satisfy the SMR.

While most candidates meet the SMR by passing the applicable CSET, doing so can be costly and time intensive. Specifically, each CSET includes 1-3 subtests and each subtest costs between \$99 and \$134. This can add additional expense, frustration, and delay to the teacher credentialing process.

Today, many teachers come from non-teaching careers with dense subject matter knowledge or have decided at a later age that they want to become teachers. As documented by

the CTC's Title II Report, the average age of new teachers is 33 years old. The life and professional experiences of these new candidates can equip them with the necessary subject matter competency and the state has an opportunity to provide options for prospective teachers to enter the field, especially at a time when COVID-19 has limited testing slots at examination centers.

SOLUTION

AB 437 expands pathways to demonstrate subject matter competency for teacher credentialing while still ensuring a rigorous process for validating content knowledge.

Specifically, a teacher credential candidate would be permitted to use higher education coursework to demonstrate competency if it was completed at a regionally accredited institution of higher education and is aligned with existing SMRs.

AB 437 also allows candidates to fulfill their SMR by combining their coursework with the passage of CSET subtests.. This mix-and-match option provides greater flexibility to both credentialing programs and candidates, particularly those in rural areas of the state without access to the desired subject matter program.

SPONSOR

Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)

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