

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.



August 29, 2018

Chancellor William E. Kirwan, Ph.D.
Chair, Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
Legislative Services Building
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Dr. Kirwan:

Teach For America shares the state's interest in establishing meaningful standards and regulations for operating quality teacher preparation programs that produce the most effective, diverse, and culturally competent teachers for Maryland students. We encourage the Commission and the High Quality Teachers & Leaders Working Group to review the following recommendations and requests for further clarification of the most recent recommendations:

We encourage the High Quality Teachers & Leaders Working Group to consider that any requirements put in place correlate to data and research on teacher effectiveness. Our experience is that our program model translates into some of the most effective and diverse teacher pipelines in Baltimore City Public Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools. **For example, among the past four TFA Baltimore cohorts, more than half of our incoming corps members identify as people of color, with an average of 32% identifying as African American. Additionally, an average of 46% identify as coming from low-income backgrounds. In Prince George's County, an average of 56% of corps members have identified as people of color and 45% as coming from low income backgrounds among our past four cohorts.**

TFA corps members and alumni have also proven to be a long-term talent force for City Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools. In City Schools, we have nearly 60 alumni in school leadership roles (including 5 Transformational Principals), more than 30 alumni in central office staff roles, and more than 500 teachers (including more than 50 Model Teachers). Meanwhile, two TFA alumni currently serve as principals in Prince George's County, two alumni work as assistant principals, and four alumni serve in other school or district staff roles. Further, there are more than 70 TFA teachers currently working in schools across Prince George's County Public Schools.

We recommend that the teaching practicum envisioned by the working group be one that, in the context of alternative teacher preparation programs, spans pre-service and in-service teaching. The structure of alternative teacher preparation programs combines accelerated pre-service training with direct classroom-based supervision, coaching, mentorship, and on-going training for the first two years of a teacher's career, which enables us to recruit, train, and develop an effective and diverse cohort of teachers. To assist the full Commission with its work, Teach For America suggests the following language be added to the recommendation on alternative teacher preparation programs:

"To meet the specified number of hours or one-year time frame, the teaching practicum may include pre-service and in-service requirements."

We support pre-service teaching practicum requirements that include hours devoted to instruction and working directly with students, receiving regular feedback and coaching on teaching, observations of other teachers and time to reflect on those observations with peers and mentors, and professional development



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on lesson planning, classroom management, as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion programming. We seek clarity on whether these are the types of training and activities that the state would also see as central to a pre-service clinical teaching practicum experience for alternative teacher preparation program participants and which could be included in the 100 hour pre-service requirement in the recommendations.

We support the concept of at least a full year of ongoing in-service clinical training and support for alternative teacher preparation program participants when they are teaching on their Resident Teacher Certificates with regular individualized coaching, mentorship, observations of teaching and feedback. We would have significant concerns if the recommendation to require a one-year practicum for alternative teacher preparation program participants was intended to be an entirely pre-service requirement, as that would have a dramatically negative impact on our ability to provide a critical source of diverse and effective teachers in Baltimore City Public Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools.

Regarding the requirement for completion of a performance assessment prior to program completion (e.g. edTPA, PPAT), we would like clarification on when participants of alternative teacher preparation programs would complete this assessment. Our understanding is that the edTPA and similar assessments are meant to assess readiness to teach independently and not while under the supervision, coaching, and support of a state-approved teacher preparation program. We would therefore assume that this assessment would be one that alternative teacher preparation program teachers would complete prior to program completion, either as a condition of successful program completion or as a condition of attaining the license that the state issues to state-approved program completers (e.g. Standard Professional Certificate I or Professional Eligibility Certificate). We would like to confirm this understanding.

Teach For America thanks you for considering these recommendations and looks forward to receiving further clarification on the items mentioned above.

Sincerely,



Courtney Cass
Executive Director
Teach For America Baltimore



Adele Fabrikant, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Teach For America D.C. Region

cc: Senator Paul G. Pinsky
Rachel Hise



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