

Rachelle Matossian

-Testimony in support of SB25-154 Enhancing Access to Educator Pathways

Good Afternoon,

My name is Rachelle Matossian. I have been an educator (K-5)/school counselor (K-12) since 2002. I have earned 3 Masters Degrees (MAEd, MASC, MBA) during my career. I also earned my ECE certification through Wildwood. I am absolutely in favor of allowing for different pathways opening up more opportunities to meet the high need for educators in our community to serve the extensive needs of our students.

The bill requires an early childhood special education, elementary, or special education generalist licensure endorsement candidate who meets the minimum coursework standards by successfully completing a content-based or a performance-based assessment (assessments) to successfully complete certain assessments.

A candidate for an early childhood special education licensure endorsement must successfully complete no more than 2 assessments that measure:

Knowledge and skills important for the safe and effective practice of a special education teacher who serves students from birth through third grade; and Knowledge and skills that an initial teacher must have to support the reading and writing development of students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

A candidate for an elementary licensure endorsement must successfully complete no more than 2 assessments that measure: Mathematical knowledge and skills that are essential for students in kindergarten through sixth grade; and Knowledge and skills that an initial teacher must have to support the reading and writing development of students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

A candidate for a special education generalist licensure endorsement must successfully complete no more than 2 assessments that measure: Basic principles of general special education and the application of those principles to realistic situations; and Knowledge and skills that an initial teacher must have to support the reading and writing development of students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

(7) (a) CURRENTLY LICENSED COLORADO TEACHERS SEEKING TO 12 ADD AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT, EARLY 13 CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT, ELEMENTARY 14 EDUCATION ENDORSEMENT, OR SPECIAL EDUCATION GENERALIST 15 ENDORSEMENT MAY DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES BY 16 SUBMITTING EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVING SUFFICIENTLY HIGH EDUCATION 17 COURSEWORK GRADES ON COURSEWORK ALIGNED WITH RELEVANT 18 STANDARDS AS APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

The bill would expand opportunities for people interested in becoming teachers. We know since Covid there has been a shortfall. Educators are more than people with licenses. Education and Job and Life Experience are all invaluable in teaching and growing learners. We should have more than one way to measure knowledge and performance outcomes.

The bill allows a currently licensed Colorado teacher seeking to add an early childhood education endorsement, early childhood special education endorsement, elementary education endorsement, or special education generalist endorsement may demonstrate professional competencies by submitting evidence of achieving sufficiently high education coursework grades on coursework aligned with relevant standards as approved by the department of education.

This Bill has passed the Senate and we are asking to pass this in the House and get it signed into law.

Respectfully Submitted.

Written Testimony for SB25-154 Access to Educator Pathways Testimony
House Education Committee
Submitted by Dr. Cindy Gutierrez
April 3, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony and thank you Representative Hamrick & Senator Kipp for sponsoring SB 25-154 Access to Educator Pathways. My name is Dr. Cindy Gutierrez and I am the Director of Clinical Teacher Education and Partnerships at the University of Colorado Denver. I am testifying on behalf of the University of Colorado in support of the bill. Creating more accessibility to educator pathways is critical to addressing Colorado's teacher shortage. A central aspect of accessibility is the need to remove barriers that get in the way of individuals entering and continuing in the teaching profession. This bill tackles two important barriers that will make a difference.

First, the bill addresses issues surrounding the Praxis requirements in Elementary, Special Education, & Early Childhood Special Education— all areas of the workforce that face critical shortages. We all support the need for teachers to demonstrate effective content knowledge; but we want to ensure that we have multiple ways individuals can demonstrate that knowledge and that it aligns with the most essential aspects of their teaching responsibilities. The stakeholder process for this bill has resulted in reducing the number of praxis exams to what is most important for these licensure areas. Members of the educator prep community commend CDE for listening to our concerns and committing to take immediate action on this issue through the State Board. In addition the bill expands access to the multiple measures approach for Praxis to already licensed teachers who are ready and eager to add an additional endorsement in these licensure areas. At CU Denver we support dozens of licensed teachers each year to earn added endorsements, particularly in Special Education and Early Childhood Special Education. With years of experience as general ed teachers, they are often the most ready and effective in making the transition to teach in these specialized positions, yet often find themselves getting stuck with the numerous praxis exams that are time consuming, costly, and a major burden in their already very busy professional lives.

Second, this bill addresses a bureaucratic barrier that has historically limited access to which institutions of higher education can offer dual enrollment courses aligned to the statewide TREP pathway for high school students interested in exploring and pursuing a career in education. The bill creates the opportunity for districts to now partner with any institution of higher education, not just community colleges, because it really takes all of us innovatively tackling this issue. At CU Denver, we currently partner with 10 districts that have a combined enrollment of over 300 students per year in our education dual enrollment pathway that enables high school students to earn up to 36 credit hours towards a degree and teaching license. Ensuring these students have the same equitable access to utilize the TREP program to continue their pursuit of their degree and teaching career is essential to them, their families, and our educator workforce. Thank you for your time and I hope you will vote in favor of this bill.