

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Hope San Filippo and I am an English Language Support Specialist at the High School level. I work with students who are working to acquire English proficiency and have another language as their first language. I have been a teacher for 23 years in four states; I've received teaching awards at two of my schools and in addition to state teaching certificates in K-12 English as a Second Language and K-12 Spanish in North Carolina (and now Colorado), I have a National Board certification in English as a New Language. My husband and I moved to Colorado in the summer of 2021 to be closer to our son. With our previous moves, I had not had any difficulty transferring my teaching credentials from one state to another. I assumed that Colorado would be the same; however, this was not the case.

I was hired in mid-June, 2021, and immediately submitted my North Carolina certificates to the Colorado Department of Education. In July of 2021, after my husband and I moved to Colorado, I received a message that the CDE was behind in processing certificates. A few weeks after beginning my new job in the Cherry Creek School District in August, I received an email from the CDE asking for me to complete a worksheet providing additional evidence that I was prepared to be a teacher of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students. This was very surprising to me, as schools in North Carolina, Maryland and Pennsylvania had all found me perfectly qualified to teach both Multilingual Learners and Spanish, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards had approved both my original application in 2010 and my renewal application in 2021. However, I attempted to comply with the CDE's request. I did not have documentation for some of the evidence the CDE required, as I had taken the courses more than 15 years before. I requested the records from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and was told that due to post-pandemic staffing shortages, my request would take 60 business days to fulfill. Meanwhile I requested help from my district administrators, but they said they were dependent on the Colorado Department of Education to handle my licensure. I continued to stay in touch with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, asking them to expedite my records search. I also attempted to contact my evaluator at the Colorado Department of Education, although it was extremely difficult to get through to a particular individual there: I spent hours of planning time on hold on multiple days, only to have to hang up without having spoken to anyone when it was time for me to teach. Frustrated, I eventually resigned myself to waiting for the records to arrive.

In November of 2021, I took a full day off school and waited on the phone for hours until I could speak with my actual CDE evaluator. He told me that my application for a teacher's certificate in Colorado had expired and advised me to seek certification as a substitute teacher while I was waiting for documentation from North Carolina. I was shocked by this, because if I were to be recategorized as a substitute teacher, my salary would be much lower, I would lose my job security, and all of my training and experience would be completely disregarded. I had moved all the way from North Carolina after being offered a job that it turned out I might not be able to get permission to do!

To add insult to injury, in December of 2021, the Human Resources office of my district contacted me requesting an update on my licensure situation. I responded that I was still waiting on records from North Carolina - 60 business days converted to almost 90 calendar days, especially given Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. In early January, my Human Resources

Director called me in, told me that I was out of compliance with my teaching contract as I had no Colorado licensure, and placed me on administrative leave. I was told that I could not set foot on school property, I could not contact my colleagues (including my co-teachers who relied on me to help teach classes on a daily basis) and that if I could not resolve the situation in the 5 remaining days of leave that I had in my bank, I would begin to be on unpaid leave until my certification issues were resolved. My computer was confiscated and I left the office feeling like a criminal.

In despair, I contacted the Colorado Education Association. Jackie Parkins, Colorado Education Association UniServ Director for my region, Carlye Holladay, VP of the Cherry Creek Education Association and Joshua Quick, Director of Professional Practice in the Teaching and Learning Dept. of the CEA swung into action to provide support and advice. Fortunately, Mr. Quick had contacts at the Colorado Department of Education. He was able to speak with someone at a supervisory level, who immediately issued me a 7 year Professional Teacher License in both K-12 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education and K-12 Spanish. I was back at work within the 5 days' personal time that remained in my bank. If I had not been a member of the Colorado Education Association, or had not thought to ask them for help, or if these individuals had not been so professional and quick-thinking, I am certain that I would have been fired. Even so, my experience of moving here was stressful and alienating. I have years of successful teaching experience and training and was shaken by the difficulty of trying to transfer my fully validated credentials to Colorado from North Carolina. I can't imagine how a young new teacher from out of state might feel if put through the same ordeal. The irony was that while I was on administrative leave, there was a substitute crisis due to the omicron surge of the COVID virus. The people who covered for me were not even certified as substitutes; they were employees in the Budget office of my school district forced to cover in an emergency situation.

Our news media is filled with reports of teachers leaving the profession and teacher shortages. I'm certain that I am not the only example of how complicated the bureaucratic hurdles of transferring credentials between states can be. It is unconscionable that teachers that have been duly prepared, examined and certified by other states cannot be seamlessly hired to fill Colorado's vacancies. I hope that the Colorado House Education committee will see fit to pass legislation streamlining the process of hiring out-of-state teachers. Colorado is a beautiful place to live, and I'm certain that others like myself would love to work here. Colorado students deserve the best possible teachers, no matter where they were trained. Thank you so much for listening and for all that you do to make Colorado the best it can be.

Sincerely,

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