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ATPE comments on Proposed New 19 TAC Chapter 152, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Examination Requirements, §152.1001, Exceptions to Examination Requirements for Individuals Certified Outside the State

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The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) is a member-owned, member-governed professional association of more than 100,000 Texas educators across the State of Texas. ATPE offers the following comments regarding proposed new 19 TAC Chapter 152, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Examination Requirements, §152.1001, Exceptions to Examination Requirements for Individuals Certified Outside the State. **Our input focuses on ensuring educators certified out-of-state are held to high standards of certification and enter Texas classrooms with the necessary training and experience Texas students deserve.**

ATPE has made educator preparation and certification a primary focus of our advocacy efforts. Educator training and certification held to high expectations and standards play a vital role in ensuring every student has access to a well-prepared, productive educator. It also has a lasting impact on retaining those strong educators in the classroom. Research consistently shows that access to a high-quality teacher is the most important in-school factor leading to a student's success. High standards for educator recruitment, preparation, and certification help ensure that prospective teachers acquire the background knowledge required to be successful in the classroom.

This focus on high standards for educator training and certification should not end at prospective teachers trained in Texas. ATPE recognizes that educators trained out-of-state bring valuable experience and diverse perspectives to Texas classrooms, and we welcome them to the Texas public school system. Still, we know that we cannot place ill-prepared educators in the 21st century Texas classroom and expect them to achieve excellence; all Texas education policies must work to ensure classrooms are filled with educators who have been strongly prepared.

While certain exceptions to certification testing may have a place in helping to get high-quality, experienced teachers in Texas classrooms, the focus must remain on high standards that help ensure we are limiting exceptions to only those educators with a proven track record of success in educating students. We offer the following amendment to 19 TAC 152.1001 in an effort to

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators. For additional information, contact government@atpe.org.

strengthen the rule proposal. ATPE believes the experience required to obtain a standard certificate in Texas for those certified out-of-state should be *at least* two years.

§152.1001(c)(1)(E): Minimum requirement specific to classroom teaching experience

(E) for an applicant certified as a classroom teacher, have ~~one~~ two academic years of verifiable, full-time experience serving in the role and documented on a service record; and

The proposed rule exempts qualified educators certified out-of-state from the preparation and training standards to which Texas educators are held. These exempted standards include the minimum GPA requirement placed on candidates entering a certification program; the number of curriculum hours educators in training must complete; the amount of clinical training a candidate must possess before obtaining full certification; the amount of time new teachers must spend working with mentors and coaches to develop their craft; and training specific to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the Texas educator standards, and the Texas Educator Code of Ethics. These are all valuable training requirements Texas-trained educators are expected to complete, and policy makers in Texas have identified these and many more standards of preparation as necessary.

If we are going to exempt certain educators prepared out of state from these standards of preparation and certification, we should at a minimum be ensuring they bring valuable experience to Texas classrooms. Studies show that teaching experience improves a teacher's practice dramatically in the beginning years of their career. Anecdotally, we also hear from ATPE member educators that the first year or two of teaching is a whirlwind, and it isn't until the years after where teachers begin to settle in to their practice and catch their stride. One academic year of classroom teaching experience is simply not a high enough standard to serve as a substitute for the type of preparation and training received.

ATPE believes the experience required of classroom teachers certified out-of-state should, at a minimum, be increased to meet the expectation set for out-of-state professional class certificate holders. The experience of all educators plays a valuable role in their professional success and the impact they have on student learning.

Considering research consistently points to a high-quality teacher as the most important in-school factor affecting a student's success and that we know experience in the initial years of teaching has a considerable impact on student learning, ATPE respectfully requests that the commissioner revise proposed new 19 TAC Chapter 152 to increase the experience requirement for certain classroom teachers who are exempted from certification testing requirements in Texas. Texas students and classrooms deserve assurances that all teachers, whether certified in Texas or out-of-state, enter the classroom prepared to impact student learning.