**Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure**

**DATE: January 31, 2022**

**TOPIC: Liaison Report: Virginia Teacher Licensure Policy: Biases and**

**Barriers to Diversifying the Workforce (SJR 15)**

**Background:**

In 2017, the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia’s Educator Pipeline noted the growing shortage of effective educators entering and remaining in the profession as well as particular barriers to entry for teachers of color. Local school divisions throughout the Commonwealth continue to struggle to recruit and retain diverse, high-quality teachers. The teacher workforce is becoming more racially homogeneous over time, whereas public elementary and secondary school populations continue to grow in both size and racial diversity.

This growth demands careful consideration of policy changes to address teacher shortages and the lack of teacher diversity in order to best serve the needs of all public school students, especially in light of recent supportive findings such as a study published by the Institute of Labor Economics that concludes that low-income black students who have at least one black teacher in elementary school are significantly more likely to graduate high school and consider attending college.

In response to this data and the growing challenges in Virginia, the 2020 General Assembly passed [Senate Joint Resolution 15,](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+SJ15) requiring the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements for any inherent biases that may prevent minority teacher candidates from entering the profession. A Request for Proposals was disseminated December 2, 2020, yielding two submissions from institutions of higher education to conduct the study. After careful consideration, a review panel determined the two submitted proposals would not result in actionable recommendations to remove inherent bias barriers in licensure. A request to extend the report submission deadline and the appropriation was approved. To continue with the study, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was drafted instead. The MOA was entered in May 2021, and the work of the study was completed in October 2021.

VDOE partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Education and the Wilder School to perform a research study and produce a report in response to this legislation. The report indicates barriers exist at the recruitment and/or entry stage, which includes multiple pathways into the profession, and critical retention stage. A multi-pronged approach across the

1

General Assembly, VDOE, and school divisions is needed to reduce bias in Virginia’s teacher licensure policy and, ultimately, diversify the teacher workforce.

**Statutory Authority:**

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly approved [Senate Joint Resolution 15](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+SJ15) (SJR15) that requested the VDOE to study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements for any inherent biases that may prevent minority teacher candidates from entering the teaching profession. SJR15 stated that it is imperative to identify and eliminate any barriers to a sufficient and diverse teacher workforce in the Commonwealth. The General Assembly requested the study report with its findings and recommendation be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly.

**Action:**

No action requested. The Assistant Superintendent of Teacher Education and Licensure recommends the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure receive the report as presented.

2