

Remarks of: Lisa Mosey

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Before the State Department of Education and State Board of Education  
concerning the proposed changes in certification in Special Education

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Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Mosey and I'm a 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher in New Milford. I am here today because I am greatly concerned about the proposed changes overall in certification but especially in the area of Special Education. I have been teaching for 22 years and have had many special education students over that time but the numbers of classified students have steadily increased over the past years. The amount of time that the special education teachers are able to spend overall working closely with these students has diminished greatly due to increased numbers in their caseload as well as more responsibilities and mandates required already by the state and federal government. Each year we battle for our local budget to be passed, and see our class sizes increasing all the time. Certain programs such as a level in math for Basic Skills gets cut due to budget issues, therefore resulting in those classified students who may need a more focused and hands on curriculum to be in a much larger class with a lack of

support from a co-taught or collaborative class. This stems from a lack of special education teachers overall due once again to cuts in budget. Therefore, the impact of requiring a master's degree not only for initial special ed. certification, as well as no clear commitment to grandfathering existing special education teachers, would greatly impact budgetary concerns when it comes to hiring teachers who would have to be paid a higher salary due to their master degree status. But before those teachers would even get to an interview and possibly be hired, they would be forced to spend thousands of dollars extra in order to attain that master's degree requirement. Very simply, many teachers from the baby boom era are retiring from teaching, the amount of people going into teaching overall has dropped and according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, "A third of newly hired teachers leave during their first three years of teaching and almost half leave in the first five years." Put all this together with these proposed changes and you will see a major shift in teacher shortage overall but especially in the area of Special education. It has been said that a "teacher is a teacher is a teacher" but I feel that is only on a basic level. Special education teachers have much more on their plates than ever before and I see the stress level rising all the time in my day to day dealings with them. For

example, one of my special education teachers can be found many nights at school until well beyond 9 p.m.

As far as student teaching is concerned, I know that my own 8 weeks (I graduated in 1985) were invaluable and I only wish I had more time in that area. To eliminate student teaching for special education teachers is quite frankly a scary proposition as this is the best way to understand the many different student needs and ways to meet those needs and how to address the changes you may need to make over time –you don't get that from a textbook. How can you expect those teachers to go on and train other teachers and paraprofessionals in these areas if they haven't had the "hand's on" experience themselves? It is not possible.

If these changes become a reality, the impact on regular teachers will become apparent in the learning of every student, not only the classified ones. As it is right now, I have one co-taught class and it is not nearly enough to address the needs of my students. We have zero planning time once again due to the lack of numbers of special ed. teachers, who in any free moment are testing, in PPT meetings, working on modifying curriculum for regular education teachers as well as teaching their own classes.

To add insult to injury, the requirement of 75 hours of CEUs in specific areas would be next to impossible to accomplish unless you got a part time job to enable you to pay for all the extra workshops and courses needed to fulfill that requirement. As I am sure you know, the local districts are only required to OFFER 18 hours or 1.8 CEUs per year to their staff. You do the math.

Overall, all of this would have a major impact on a personal decision to entertain a career in special education, or not.

Please consider having two levels of certification—one for a teacher and one for a specialist who therefore would have the time and expertise to fulfill the requirements of that position.

I implore you to please listen to the reasoning of those who are on the front line on a daily basis and we don't do it to become rich or famous. WE do it for the children—ALL of them.

Thank you for your time today.