

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 444

**52nd Legislature, 1st Session, 2015**

**Tracking Number:** .199245.1

**Short Title:** Alternative Teacher Licensure Program

**Sponsor(s):** Senator John C. Ryan

**Analyst:** James Ball and David Harrell

**Date:** February 19, 2015

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 444 makes an appropriation for the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MCG) to contract with a community-based organization to develop and implement, in consultation with institutions of higher education and with employers, educational career cohorts consisting of persons seeking alternative licensure for a career as bilingual math and science teachers and teachers of:

- science;
- mathematics;
- technology;
- engineering;
- special education;
- career-technical education; and
- early childhood education.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$250,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Local Government Division of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) for expenditure in FY 16. Unexpended or unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

It is unclear how and to what end the funds appropriated by SB 444 would be expended. The alternative licensure contemplated in the bill would likely involve costs, such as tuition at institutions of higher education and fees for educator licenses (\$125 for an initial license and \$95 for a licensure renewal). However, the term “educational career cohorts” is not defined in the bill; and educational licensure is an individual rather than a group process.

**Technical Issues:**

Although SB 444 seems to provide a means toward alternative educational licensure to teach in certain fields, it does so without reference to provisions for alternative licensure already in the *School Personnel Act*; and it seems to confuse licensure areas with endorsement areas (see “Substantive Issues,” below).

## **Substantive Issues:**

Under both state law and rule of the Public Education Department (PED), alternative licensure means an optional pathway to a teaching license – such as early childhood, elementary, middle level, secondary, PreK-12 specialty area, and special education – for candidates who have earned at least a baccalaureate degree with sufficient credit hours that correspond to an area of instruction in elementary and secondary schools. Endorsements are added to teaching licenses to designate areas of content expertise that a teacher has generally demonstrated through college and university coursework and by passing PED’s content area licensure tests. The areas listed in SB 444 are a mixture of licenses and endorsements: special education, early childhood education, and what PED calls Secondary Vocational-Technical Education (not “career-technical education”) are licenses, whereas science, mathematics, and bilingual are endorsements on teaching licenses.

SB 444 indicates that a community-based organization will be contracted to develop and implement educational career cohorts. It is not clear exactly what these cohorts are supposed to do once they are identified. Because SB 444 requires “consultation with institutions of higher education,” perhaps these cohort members would enter alternative licensure programs at a higher education institution, but they could do that as individuals as well.

## **Background:**

In 2003, the *School Personnel Act* was amended to require PED to issue an alternative Level 1 license to applicants who meet certain criteria according to their undergraduate or graduate degrees; who pass the New Mexico Teacher Assessments; and who complete a department-approved program of instruction in teaching principles or demonstrate to PED, in conjunction with a school district or state agency, that they meet department-approved competencies for Level 1 teachers for the grade level to be taught.

Additional amendments enacted in 2007 allow PED to grant a Level 2 license or Level 3-A or 3-B license to applicants with post-baccalaureate degrees and prescribed experience at the postsecondary level, together with demonstrations of appropriate competencies.

More details about the alternative licensure process are enumerated in PED rule.

The alternative licensure program in elementary, secondary, and special education at Central New Mexico Community College is typical of the college or university pathway. Classes are held in the evenings and participants can complete the program in as little as three to four semesters while teaching under a PED-issued internship license.

According to the website of the MCG, the agency serves the counties of:

- Bernalillo;
- Valencia;
- Torrance; and
- Sandoval.

MCG provides planning services in the areas of:

- transportation;
- agriculture;
- workforce development;
- employment growth;
- land-use;
- water; and
- economic development.

**Committee Referrals:**

SEC/SFC

**Related Bills:**

SB 329 *School Licensure Reciprocity Requirements*