



September 22, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education,  
and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Rogers, Congresswoman Lowey, Chairman Cole, and Congresswoman DeLauro:

The Coalition for Teaching Quality (CTQ)—comprised of more than 100 civil rights, disability, rural, parent, community, and education organizations—is committed to ensuring that every student in every classroom in America has access to fully-prepared and effective teachers. For that reason, we strongly oppose extending the highly qualified teacher (HQT) provision (Section 163 of H.R. 3082 P.L. 111-242), which was enacted in December 2010. This provision allows individuals serving as a teacher-of-record who have not yet completed teacher preparation programs or who are currently enrolled in an alternative teacher preparation program to be classified as “highly qualified”—even though they are still in training. During the FY 2014 appropriations process, the provision was extended through the 2015-2016 school year despite the opposition of more than 90 organizations.

The FY 2013 appropriations process also included a one-year extension, as well as a requirement for the U.S. Secretary of Education to submit a report to Congress by December 31, 2013 on the distribution of teachers-of-record still participating in alternative certification programs.

In June 2015, the U.S. Department of Education finally released its long overdue report on this issue as directed by Congress. This report confirmed a weakening of the HQT definition has allowed states and school districts to disproportionately place teachers who are still in training in classrooms predominately serving students from low-income families, English Language learners, and special education students – those students who often have the greatest needs and would benefit most from a well-prepared teacher who has fully completed their preparation and training for the classroom. The data reveal that there are approximately 35,000 teachers still in training leading classrooms across the country. Even more concerning is that these teachers are more than twice as likely to be teaching in the highest poverty school districts as compared to the lowest poverty districts.

Under the current provision, teachers-in-training can continue to teach for as long as three years even if they never complete their preparation program, pass certification tests, or meet other state certification standards. Even more concerning, parents are never notified that their child's teacher may still be in training and therefore not actually "highly qualified" according to the original definition of the term.

As such, CTQ continues to strongly oppose any continued extension of the HQT provision as it will perpetuate the harmful practice of allowing teachers with little-to-no training to be recognized as "highly qualified" teachers. Further, CTQ does not believe the provision is consistent with the original intent of the authorizing statute, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and including this provision in any FY 2016 appropriations bill undermines the work that is currently being done by the respective House and Senate education committees to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The proper place for discussion and review of any HQT legislative language should be in the reauthorization -- not appropriations -- process.

Every student, especially students from low-income homes, students of color, students with disabilities and English Language learners, deserve teachers who are fully prepared on day one. Federal policy must further this goal, and not undermine it by permitting the current definition of "highly qualified" to have no basic or minimal standard for being a teacher of record.

Far from destroying alternative teacher preparation programs or creating an unworkable situation in our nation's schools, allowing the current HQT amendment to sunset after the 2015-2016 school year will give policymakers another opportunity to restore parents' and policymakers' ability to identify and monitor the inequitable distribution of teachers-in-training, and target teacher capacity-building to teachers with the least experience and greatest need for support

While we understand that states and school districts must address the short-term reality of teacher shortages, putting teachers in training in the classroom is not a long-term solution. It is not fair to the students in the classroom who deserve a teacher who is fully prepared to meet their needs. Nor is it fair to the teacher in training to place them in a position where they are not fully prepared to succeed. A more systemic nationwide strategy is needed to address the teacher shortages, where states and districts invest in building a pipeline of teaching excellence and support across all communities. Equitable access and improved student outcomes will not be met if we continue to lower the bar for teachers. Labeling teachers "highly qualified" who are not highly qualified does nothing to improve the teaching profession and serves only to mask the inequities that exist and prevents meaningful reform.

We urge you to allow this provision to expire and not to include an extension of it in any FY2016 appropriations bill. We also ask that Congress once again require the U.S. Secretary of Education to provide a follow-up report on the distribution of teachers-of-record still participating in alternative certification programs.

Sincerely,

Members of the Coalition for Teaching Quality (listed below)

**National Organizations**

Alliance for Excellent Education  
Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Association State Colleges and Universities  
American Council for School Social Work  
American Council on Rural Special Education  
American Federation of Teachers  
ASPIRA Association  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Autism National Committee

Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Broader Bolder Approach  
Center for Teaching Quality  
Citizens for Effective Schools  
Coalition for Community Schools  
Council for Exceptional  
Children Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates  
Disability Policy Collaboration, A Partnership of The Arc and UCP  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund Inc.  
Easter Seals  
Education Law Center  
FairTest, The National Center for Fair & Open Testing  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Gamaliel Foundation  
Helen Keller National Center  
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, National Taskforce on Education  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
Learning Policy Institute  
Movement Strategy Center  
National Alliance of Black School Educators  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future  
National Consortium on Deaf---Blindness  
National Council for Educating Black Children  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Council of Teacher of Mathematics  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Down Syndrome Congress  
National Down Syndrome Society  
National Education Association

National Indian Education Association  
National Latino Education Research & Policy Project  
National Network of State Teachers of the Year  
National Opportunity to Learn Campaign  
Opportunity Action  
Parents Across America  
Partnership for 21st Century Skills  
PDK International  
Progressive States Action  
Public Advocates Inc.  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Rural School and Community Trust School  
Social Work Association of America  
Southwest Education Development Laboratory  
TASH---Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities  
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children  
TESOL International Association  
The Arc United  
Cerebral Palsy  
United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries

### **State and Local Organizations**

Abbott Leadership Institute--Newark, New Jersey  
Action Now--Illinois  
Action Now--North Carolina  
ACTION United  
Alliance for Quality Education (AQE)  
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)  
Arkansas Community Organizations  
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network  
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council--Chicago  
California Association for Bilingual Education  
Californians for Justice  
Californians Together  
California Latino School Boards Association  
Campaign for Quality Education  
Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning  
Coalition for Educational Justice  
Citizen Action of New York  
Delawareans for Social and Economic Justice

Educate Our State  
Education Voters Pennsylvania  
Grow Your Own Illinois  
Inner City Struggle  
Justice Matters  
Legal Advocates for Children and Youth  
Montgomery County Education Forum  
Parent---U---Turn  
Parents for Unity  
RYSE Center  
Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education  
Young Voices---Providence, Rhode Island  
Youth On Board--Somerville, Massachusetts  
Youth Together