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May 1, 2017

*By electronic mail*

The Honorable Lorena S. Gonzalez Fletcher  
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: AB 1217 (Bocanegra) – SUPPORT AS AMENDED,  
April 18, 2017**

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez Fletcher:

Public Advocates supports AB 1217 (Bocanegra), which would appropriate \$60 million from the General Fund to the Superintendent to provide eligible Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) with grants to be used towards establishing, maintaining, or expanding teacher residency programs. This bill also gives priority to LEAs with residency programs that target teacher shortage areas such as math, science, bilingual education, and special education fields, as well as in hard-to-staff schools.

Public Advocates is a civil rights legal organization that has served as a key voice for education equity in landmark cases such as *Serrano v. Priest* and *Williams v. California*. In the *Williams* lawsuit, we complained that thousands of students were denied equal educational opportunity because their teachers were not fully credentialed, not properly assigned to the courses they were authorized to teach, or were not authorized to teach English Learners. As part of the settlement agreement, the state set a minimum standard in legislation to be applied statewide and this standard is now one of the state's priorities which districts must address in their Local Control Accountability Plans. As our state faces a daunting teacher shortage, we have advocated to maintain high standards for teacher preparation and for the state to take measures to attract and retain teachers, particularly to our highest-need schools.

California's severe teacher shortage is characterized by steadily declining enrollment in educator preparation courses and growing turnover rates. AB 1217 will address the teacher retention issues such as uneven support for quality teacher working conditions and unequal access to state-mandated induction. Teacher residency programs have been highlighted in recent recommendations by the Learning Policy

Institute as immediate steps California should take and Public Advocates has consistently supported this approach in the Legislature's bill and budget process.

Unfortunately, the teacher shortage trends of high turnover/low retention have disproportionate effects on specific subject areas, such as mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual education while also negatively impacting the achievement of our neediest students, particularly English learners, low-income, and students of color. Teacher residency programs are recommended policy solutions to address California's shortage and have proven to increase educator retention rates, enhance the effectiveness of teaching, and diversify the teacher profession, especially in the high-needs districts that sponsor the programs.

By providing funds to applicant LEAs to create, maintain, and improve teacher residency programs, AB 1217 would mitigate our state's growing teacher shortage and revitalize core subject areas with fully-qualified teachers for our neediest students.

For these reasons, we support AB 1217 and urge the Committee to pass it through Appropriations to reflect budget negotiations on this and other proposals to address the state's teacher shortage. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our position

Sincerely,



Liz Guillen  
Director of Legislative & Community Affairs  
(916) 803-5596 – cell

Cc: Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Assembly Member Raul Bocanegra

