

Remarks of Jesse Gumpert
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education concerning proposed changes to certification in Special Education

April 29, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Jesse Gumpert and I'm a special education teacher in Bethany. I urge you to not make these changes to special educators' certifications. I am a first year teacher, I have worked very hard to get to this point, and a change like this could put an end to my employment and to my future as an educator.

I have put my life on hold, my wife's life on hold and assumed an enormous amount of education debt to earn this certification. I entered into a planned program for this certification and a master's. There is no way that this would have been feasible if a master's was required to even begin teaching. Speaking for all the newly certified teachers I graduated with, we could not have gone on and on through these programs if employment was contingent on a master's. The cost is too high; adults with mortgages, children, and lives to maintain cannot repeat this process of putting their lives on hold. It's not right.

In addition, I have "paid to play" already. Student teaching is an invaluable experience that cannot be replicated through clinical trials or master's courses. It was also an incredible expense that I took on knowing it would make me a teacher. Extending the educational requirements of this position will not bring aspiring teachers closer to responsibilities of the job. It will only result in more time in classes at \$1500 or more a course.

These changes will also hurt school districts that need to fill special education positions. As we all know, teachers without a master's and/or those still working on it come in at a bargain rate. These changes require districts to further expand their budgets, and make it more difficult for non-tenured teachers to enter the field. New teachers will effectively be more expensive, and less experienced than ever.

Personally, as a first year teacher, my wife and I have just started to really get our lives started. We just bought our first home and we're planning on finally having a family. I cannot afford to have this be the end of my career as a teacher. Do not do this. Too many of us who are gaining the experience you are calling for will be not only in jeopardy of our jobs at the present but this change will make us un-hirable. Those I attended classes with and countless others in similar programs are poised to earn their master's. I'm going back in September, we already have to; it was part of the agreement to the position. Don't make this change, don't pack my bags. I intend on having a long and impactful career, please don't do this. Thank you.