Public Comment by Roger Chamberlain on 8/26/22 at 12:35 pm CDT:

Re: OAH Docket Number 5-9021-36362

As Members of the Minnesota Senate with a combined legislative service of decades and whose committee appointments include the Education Finance and Policy Committee, we write in opposition to provisions of Rule 4615 proposed by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). Rule 4615 “Standards of Effective Practice” represents a significant break with past practice by PELSB (formerly the State Board of Teaching). Through creation of a teacher licensing board, the Legislature only intended for objective and non-divisive criteria to be developed to help ensure our public school teachers are persons with good character (which includes fair and just treatment of each individual student), subject knowledge, and practical classroom skills. The Legislature has not approved conforming the teaching profession to a singular ideological concept or imposing a politicized belief system on teacher candidates. We recognize the array of legitimate views that exist on issues throughout Minnesota, and we provide many preparation options for teaching candidates and allow local school districts to make their own hiring and curriculum decisions. In contrast, Rule 4615 appears to adopt a particular philosophical, societal, and worldview perspective. Further, no rational or clearly discernible need has been shown to exist for making such a wholescale change. Rule 4615 is neither needed nor reasonable as required by the Administrative Procedure Act. It is arbitrary in that it disregards the real facts and circumstances facing our current teacher workforce. Our job as Legislators and Members of the Senate Education Committee involves listening to hours of testimony from the public, students, families, and education professionals regarding the needs and challenges facing schools. What we have heard repeatedly – and at times shockingly – is the failure of numerous teacher preparation programs to properly train candidates in the correct and proven methods of reading instruction. And this is in spite of statutory requirements to do so and which PELSB has neglected to properly enforce. As a result, literacy scores for students of color in Minnesota lag well behind those of students in Mississippi (where proper reading instruction has been implemented for the past several years). Reading scores for all students in Minnesota are now significantly below where they were just six years ago. Fewer than one-half of our third-graders are reading proficiently. PELSB continues to idly stand watch over this unfolding disgrace, and, rather than address it forcefully, chooses instead to launch a controversial rule-making which was not requested by the testifiers that we heard from during the most recent Legislative Sessions, and which has not been shown to have a provable effect on ensuring academic success for students of every background. In addition to our noting that there has been no law passed by the Legislature for PELSB to undertake this particular rule-making, we also object to the impact that this proposal may have on legislation that was duly enacted by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor five years ago. In 2017, the Teacher Licensure Reform Act was adopted (Chapter 5) with the express intent of removing obstacles (many of these the creation of PELSB) that were preventing qualified candidates from entering the teaching profession. Now, with the proposal of Rule 4615, this access is again being threatened by having the potential to erect new barriers to entrants as teacher preparation programs, assessments, and requirements are shuffled in an unpredictable, ambiguous, and politicized manner, and measurable skills and objective academic subject knowledge are neglected. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and objections. Sincerely, Sen. Roger Chamberlain, Chair Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee Sen. Justin Eichorn, Vice Chair Senate Education Finance and Policy Committee Sen. Julia Coleman Sen. Zach Duckworth Sen. Justin Eichorn Sen. Scott Newman Sen. Karin Housley