

Assembly Bill 221

Teach for America Prohibition in Low-Income Schools Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D – 58)

BACKGROUND

Teach for America (TFA) is a national organization that recruits young college graduates to teach in low-income urban and rural schools for a two-year commitment. TFA is not a traditional teaching program – instead of the extensive preparation traditionally educated teachers receive over four years as education majors in undergraduate credentialing programs, TFA candidates/corps members attend a five-week training program in the summer between graduating from college and beginning their teaching assignments. Once hired, corps members will continue the coursework to pursue a full teaching credential.

PROBLEM

Despite TFA's intent, inexperienced corps members are usually placed in low-income schools with students needing support from experienced teachers. These students face significant barriers to receiving a quality education, access to rigorous, college-preparatory coursework, and guidance relating to college applications and financial aid opportunities. Students from low-income schools and families are often the first in their families to attend college – experienced teachers provide invaluable guidance when these students begin the daunting application process for college admission and financial aid. Corp members are essentially learning as they go with these students. Students only have one opportunity to get a quality education each year so every year of their education matters. Young graduates from the TFA program are hired and are underprepared for the difficult teaching challenges they face.

For traditional teacher credentialing programs students on average take 2 to 4 years to complete their credential before entering the classroom.

SOLUTION

AB 221 will make the playing field among our public schools more level by ensuring that California's most vulnerable students have trained and experienced teachers in their classrooms. Specifically, by the 2020-21 school year, this measure would limit placement of Teach for America (TFA) corps members in Title 1 public schools where at least 40% of the student population is low-income.

Ensuring equity in education is a necessary component in narrowing the existing achievement gap. The answer to closing the gap in low-income schools is not placing untrained educators in them – the solution must be increased support for our teacher workforce and to populate our low-income schools with trained teachers. The purpose of Title I designation is to address systemic educational challenges facing high-poverty communities by providing more resources to school districts and schools with the highest concentrations of poverty. Our most vulnerable communities should not be the testing ground for educators.

STATUS

Introduced – January 16, 2019

SUPPORT

None on File

OPPOSITION

None on File

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