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TESTIMONY: H.3591 BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

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Although H.3591 is a bill that has received minimal public attention, it may have greater potential to improve the quality of public education than any other bill you will consider this year. I would like to commend you and your colleagues in the House of Representatives, both personally and in my capacity as Education Advocacy Specialist for the League of Women Voters, for your work in crafting a bill that creates a vehicle to gather, organize, and report publicly on the performance of educator preparation programs in South Carolina.

Since 1974-76, the national program of the League of Women Voters has supported "equal access to quality education." The League acknowledged then that defining indicators of teacher quality was not an easy task. Developing measurement instruments for valid, reliable assessment of teaching performance proved even more difficult. South Carolina was recognized as a leader for its development of the Education Entrance Examination, a basic skills assessment for teacher education candidates. The State began requiring subject area tests for teacher licensure, and the South Carolina Department of Education pioneered an early performance assessment with the Assessment of Performance in Teaching. Those were important beginning steps, but they were not sufficient. Educators wanted reliable, valid measures of typical teaching performance, rather than an assessment based on a formulaic demonstration of skills.

When I managed assessment programs in the Office of Teacher Assessment at the South Carolina Department of Education, I obtained permission to use statewide data for my 1992 doctoral dissertation, which was titled *A Comparison of Teacher Licensure Outcome Measures in NCATE and non-NCATE Institutions*. In addition to differences by type of accreditation, the data showed notable variation by institution and by certification area based on the scores from the licensure tests, but there was no way to report how well teachers actually performed once they began working in classrooms. My most important conclusion was that the best way to evaluate a teacher preparation program would be to examine the performance of its graduates. The provisions of H.3591 will accomplish essentially what I recommended.

I have long understood that our teacher preparation programs are the key to improving the education system. It is very gratifying to see that after thirty years, the conditions are finally right for establishing a program that will provide the teacher preparation programs with critical feedback and require accountability through public reporting of aggregated results.

I hope that your subcommittee will issue a favorable report and that the Senate will enact this plan to create a much-needed feedback and accountability system for South Carolina's teacher preparation programs.

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