Teacher Licensure Policies

States should get out of the business of licensing teachers and leave hiring totally up to localities.
Central Argument

“The requirements of state licensing agencies and schools of education are unnecessary hurdles that keep bright young people out of teaching.…” (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 3)
Road Map

- Problems with the “professionalism” agenda
- Problems with current licensure systems
- Demand for teachers
- Tradeoff between teacher turnover and teacher quality
- Lessons from alternative certification
- Why deregulate?
Problems with the “Professionalism” Agenda

- Represents groups’ (e.g. foundations, NEA, NCATE) special interests
- Focuses on “inputs” (teacher certification requirements) rather than “outputs” (student achievement on standardized tests)
- Rigid, “lock-step”
- Limits pool of qualified applicants

Cochran-Smith, 2001
Problems with Current Licensure Systems

- Considerable variation across states
- Exams required by many states are not rigorous enough to act as screening measures
- Links between teacher licensure and student achievement not clear

Goldhaber & Brewer, 1999
Problems, Cont’d.

- Existing teachers exempt from changes to certification requirements
- Relationship between observable teacher characteristics and teacher quality may be weak
- Potentially high quality applicants excluded from pool
Demand for Teachers

- Up to half of public school teachers to retire in next decade
- CSR initiatives create demand for more teachers
- Enrollment increases at both elementary and secondary levels
- Attrition rates for new teachers

Sullivan, 2001
Tradeoff Between Teacher Turnover and Quality

“...Recruiting more persons who might teach for a few years (as opposed to a long career) represents one of the most promising ways to raise the quality of the workforce” (Ballou, 1996, p. 125).

- High quality teachers, higher attrition rates
- Quit rates positively associated with SAT and NTE scores, college quality
- Cost of filling positions more frequently is negligible
Lessons from Alternative Certification

- Barriers to entry, among other factors, discourage highly capable college graduates from teaching (Ballou, 1996)
- Less stringent licensure requirements, more of these graduates could be hired as teachers (Goldhaber, 2003)
Lessons, cont’d.

- Urban systems would benefit most from relaxing licensure requirements (Goldhaber, 2003)
- Alternative certification increases number of minority teachers (Sullivan, 2001)
- New Jersey alternative-certification program: degree in subject area, pass subject-matter test, 3 courses (Sullivan, 2001)
Why Deregulate?

- Recruit and hire high quality teachers
- "free market" approach to education allows for flexibility, innovation, experimentation
- Charter and private school example