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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board discusses emergency declaration to assist in substitute teacher shortage

TOPEKA — To help solve the substitute teacher shortage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kansas State Board of Education on Tuesday, Jan. 11, began discussing an emergency declaration that would allow individuals meeting certain qualifications to apply for a Temporary Emergency Authorized License (TEAL).

The State Board is scheduled to vote on the emergency declaration on Wednesday, Jan. 12.

Any TEAL obtained through the emergency declaration would expire June 1, 2022.

“Although this is far from an ideal or perfect solution, we have to offer relief to Kansas teachers and schools,” said Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson. “The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched our teacher ranks thin, and there simply aren’t enough licensed individuals to fill substitute roles when our educators are sick or otherwise have to be out of the classroom. This is nothing more than a temporary solution to address an emergency need.”

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The Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), United School Administrators of

Kansas (USA–Kansas) and the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA) agree that while the solution isn't ideal, it is needed to help alleviate the shortages caused by the pandemic.

“As we continue to look to medical experts for guidance, keeping students in classrooms with highly qualified educators is our priority,” said Kevin Riemann, executive director for KNEA. “We support this temporary, but necessary, step because it gives school staff time to recover from illness without putting additional and unsustainable pressure on an already thin workforce.”

Dr. Brian Jordan, executive director of KASB, said: “Our school board members are supportive of ways to alleviate the critical staff shortages they face, and this appears to be one step to address that. We appreciate the State Board of Education focusing on this issue.”

After the June 1, 2022, date, individuals would have to meet the more rigorous requirements for a substitute teacher license.

Usually there is a minimum requirement of 60 semester credit hours from a regionally accredited college or university in order to obtain an emergency substitute license. The emergency declaration would remove this minimum requirement for the TEAL. However, candidates must:

- Meet the minimum age requirement of 18.
- Have a high school diploma. Individuals with a general educational development (GED) diploma/certificate aren't eligible.

- Have a verified employment commitment from a district or system.
- Be fingerprinted and pass a background check.
- Submit a completed application to KSDE.

“With a shrinking pool of substitutes and the growing number of teachers out with COVID and other seasonal illnesses, this is an option we can support if it keeps our schools open,” said G.A. Buie, executive director of USA-Kansas.

The State Board is scheduled to vote on the emergency declaration at 10:20 a.m. Wednesday.

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