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TO: Members of the Senate and House Education Committees

FROM: Tennessee State Board of Education

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The State Board of Education commends the Tennessee Department of Education for the comprehensive report on teacher evaluation in Tennessee as required by PC 325. Tennessee has been a national leader in teacher evaluation for some time. This report provides a thorough history of evaluation reform efforts, leading to a strong, multiple measures system of teacher effectiveness, as well as changes made over the last nearly 15 years of implementation of this system. It culminates in a detailed examination of the current opportunities and challenges within the system.

The recommendations from the teacher evaluation advisory committee are strong. These include: maintaining annual evaluation practices, including announced and unannounced observations; increasing flexibility in observations based on performance; developing guidance and providing professional development opportunities for evaluators and teachers; updating rubrics for school service personnel and novice educators; and providing tools and resources to support educator understanding of growth score calculations. Continued study of the relationships between evaluation outcomes across alternatives models, by teacher experience and preparation pathway, and by student characteristics (e.g. economic disadvantage and special education) is important to support well-informed policies and practices.

As the report shows, observation ratings have trended upward over the last decade, resulting in over 75% of teachers receiving a Level of Effectiveness (LOE) score of 4 or 5 in 2024. At the same time, individual educator growth scores are declining. As a result, the data shows a clear need for the state to continue to invest in the resources needed to provide evaluators and educators with adequate training to support meaningful teacher observations. In addition to investing in training, refining rubrics to focus on the most impactful, core standards across domains may be the right approach to addressing this potential misalignment. Lastly, while not directly related to the purpose of this report, but connected in many ways, a continued focus on the use of effective differentiated compensation plans is critical to ensure districts have the tools and resources to support strong teacher recruitment, development, and retention, especially in hard to staff subjects and schools.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dr. Sara Morrison".

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Tennessee State Board of Education