

**Assembly Committee on Education
December 17, 2015**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
Assembly Bill 581**

I want to thank Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today on Assembly Bill 581 (AB 581). My name is Sheila Briggs. I am the Assistant State Superintendent of the Division for Academic Excellence at the Department of Public Instruction (the department) and with me today is Jeff Pertl, Senior Policy Advisor. We are here to testify in opposition to AB 581. While we are supportive of flexibility, and certainly understand the desire to quickly expand a pool of potential applicants in the face of worries over shortages and the resulting market effects on salaries, we have concerns about the ultimate effects of the bill as it is currently drafted. One of the most important components of a student's success is an effective teacher. This bill would change the minimum qualifications for how Wisconsin defines the preparation to be that effective teacher.

Licensing Overview

Before moving into the bill, I think it is important to quickly review the many routes, or pathways, to becoming a licensed teacher. You may recall that when we appeared in front of you in the beginning of the session we discussed this in great detail, along with the additional flexibilities and routes the department had created over the last few years.

At its basis, all routes to licensure should revolve around ensuring minimal expectations of high quality. We currently have 11 distinct pathways to becoming a licensed educator in Wisconsin, with the last three routes added in the last biennial budget. Our pathways include traditional routes through our colleges and universities to receive a bachelor's degree, routes for career changers, and routes for currently licensed teachers adding additional areas of licensure.

Pathways to Licensure

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bachelor's Degree | 7. International & Guest Teacher |
| 2. Post Baccalaureate | 8. Trade Specialist Permit |
| 3. Alternative Route Program | 9. Experience-Based on Technology Education |
| 4. License Based on Equivalency | 10. License Based on Reciprocity |
| 5. Adding Additional License via Exam | 11. Montessori |
| 6. Professional Teaching Permit | |

In Wisconsin, we have 33 Wisconsin colleges and universities that have educator preparation programs, 10 alternative route programs, and 2 license based upon equivalency providers. Please note that alternative route program providers can include school districts, CESAs, colleges, and

private for profit and nonprofit entities. The department has a rigorous process of approving these programs, and then a yearly evaluation that is called the Continuous Review Process, to ensure quality and continuous improvement of these programs.

Wisconsin has always been known for our high-quality licensing system. Wisconsin has previously required all candidates for licensure to demonstrate that they both have the content and pedagogical knowledge needed to meet minimum state expectations to be an effective teacher. In the past, regardless of the route you took, everyone had to meet the same bar. This is no longer the case.

AB 581

In order to discuss this bill, we have to note what it is modeled on--the experience-based license for technical education created in the budget. This bill replicates issues with that license.

First and foremost, I think most parents assume that to be a teacher you have to have met some minimal state qualifications. This bill eliminates standard minimal qualifications for vocational subjects, which we call Career and Technical Education, and replaces them with a points menu districts can utilize. Some examples include:

- Anyone with a bachelor's degree in any subject can meet the points required to teach any vocational subject regardless of their major.
- Anyone who has worked full-time for 18 weeks and has earned at least 7 credits at a technical college in science, technology, engineering, math course, or in a subject related to the vocation can teach.
- Anyone who has ever received a teaching license in any subject or to teach as a substitute teacher can teach any vocational course.
- Anyone who has ever received a teaching permit, meaning they haven't met the qualifications to be a fully licensed teacher, can teach any vocational course.

As a result of this points menu, the licensing and renewal process is now based on qualifications determined by local school districts. There is no state process aligned to state standards. There are no requirements to pass the same tests everyone else has to in order to be a teacher. There is a loss of transparency here for parents and to the state. It is no longer true that all teachers have to meet the same bar to be fully licensed.

A second concern is the fact that this license is portable. While the school district must apply with the individual to get the license, once that individual has the five-year license they can apply to work anywhere on that license.

Additionally, the only quality control requirement is that the individual completes a local school district curriculum created by the district that initially hired them. There are no requirements as to what this curriculum should entail. There is no alignment with the existing state teacher standards and state renewal processes that apply to all other licensed teachers who want to renew their license. What this creates are different licensing standards across 424 school districts.

This bill and the technical education experience-based license also create implications for the preparation of the teacher teaching core courses in English, mathematics, and science. The

committee should be aware that school districts across the state have received equivalency for many courses. What I mean by that is many agriculture courses also count as science courses for purposes of graduation credit. Some business courses count for English credit. Technical education courses can count for science or mathematics credit.

Our experience with the technical education experience-based license created in the budget has given us a picture of how this bill will likely play out. The budget passed when many school districts already had staffing set for the 2015-16 school year. Even with this timeframe, however, 19 school districts applied with an applicant for one of these licenses and 19 were approved. You have the chart in front of you. As you can see there is a range of what is considered minimal preparation requirements.

AB 581 creates new issues as well. For instance it creates a broad vocational license which appears to cover all career and technical education licenses and some areas we don't license currently. It is unclear if the department has the authority to give vocational education experience-based licenses by subject area to address this, but if we do, it should be noted that this will also increase the complexity of our licensing system by creating multiple new categories of licensure.

One last implication of this bill is the unknown effect on existing preparation programs, both traditional and alternative. Over time, if people are increasingly licensed through this alternative, there may be a point where some of these programs may cease to exist due to costs involved and tests that need to be passed by candidates that aren't present in this proposal.

The department has worked hard over the last five years to provide additional flexibility and add additional licensure pathways to fit almost any situation. We are prepared to continue to work with our stakeholders and the legislature to remove additional barriers that may exist, but we believe a deeper conversation needs to occur over what minimal expectations and qualifications are necessary before people are placed in front of students.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and at this time we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.