



June 10, 2015

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald  
Senate Majority Leader  
Room 211 South, State Capitol  
Madison, WI

The Honorable Robin Vos  
Assembly Speaker  
Room 211 West, State Capitol  
Madison, WI

The Honorable Alberta Darling  
Senate Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
Room 317 East, State Capitol  
Madison, WI

The Honorable John Nygren  
Assembly Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee  
Room 309 East, State Capitol  
Madison, WI

Dear Senator Fitzgerald, Senator Darling, Speaker Vos & Representative Nygren:

We, the undersigned organizations representing school boards and administrators respectfully request that language in the Joint Finance Committee K-12 education omnibus motion relating to educator licensure be removed from the state budget proposal.

In making this request, we take no position with respect to the provisions in the omnibus motion directed specifically at teaching licenses for technical education. Our primary concerns are with the language in the last two paragraphs on page 26 and the top two paragraphs on page 27 of Motion #457.

While we recognize the desirability of providing flexibility in licensure to address teacher shortages in certain subject areas and geographic regions in our state, we also recognize the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement.

Current practice requires educators in middle and high school to have a bachelor's degree related to the subject they teach, complete intensive training on skills required to be a teacher, and successfully pass skills and subject content assessments.

The changes adopted by the Joint Finance Committee without a public hearing or other opportunity for public input would allow anyone with a bachelor's degree to teach English, math, science, or social studies courses in grades 6 through 12 and obtain a state *license* if a school board, or the governing board of an independent charter school or private school, determines the individual is proficient and has relevant experience. Under the JFC provision there would be no requirement in these subjects that a teacher candidate's bachelor's degree be related to the subject he or she intends to teach. This could result in Wisconsin public schools that employ such teachers being out of compliance with the "highly qualified teacher" requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law and subject to possible sanctions.

Under the proposal, for all other subjects in grades 6-12, any individual could obtain a teaching *permit* if a school board or the governing board of a charter school or private voucher school determines the individual is proficient and has relevant experience. It appears there would be no minimum state requirements to receive such a teaching permit, such as holding a high school diploma, passing a skills test, or having received rigorous training in pedagogy, assessment, or classroom management.

For both the license provisions and the permit provisions in the Joint Finance Committee motion, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) could not impose any additional requirements, which, according the DPI, may preclude the fingerprinting and background checks required of all other licensed school staff.

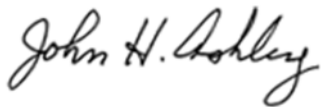
It is also important to note that a bachelor's degree is currently required in Wisconsin for all teaching *licenses* and if the JFC proposal becomes law, Wisconsin would become the only state to license persons who lack a bachelor's degree to teach subjects other than technical education.

These teacher licensure changes substitute subjective judgment for objective standards for teacher preparation, and drastically diminish the role and importance of teacher preparation. School boards and administrators currently spend a significant amount of time on reviewing applicants even with the assurance that there is a baseline of qualification in attaining a license. Without that assurance and the increased subjectivity being introduced it will be an additional time burden on districts' in their hiring process and the potential for more litigation.

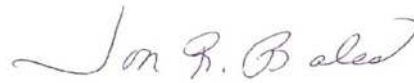
Together, we are responsible for hiring, evaluating, disciplining and dismissing teachers and are liable for any potential misdeeds by less than fully vetted or qualified teachers. We urge that the teacher licensure changes adopted by the Joint Finance Committee be removed from the state budget and be approached in a more thoughtful manner that includes a public hearing and an opportunity for input by the public, school boards, and administrators.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



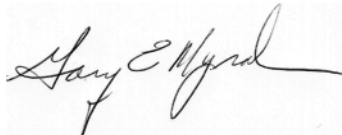
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