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Testimony for 2019 SB 184/AB 195 – A License to teach based on reciprocity

I would like to thank Chairman Olsen and all of the committee members for hearing Senate Bill 184 today. Also, I would like to thank Senator Marklein for his willingness to work on this legislation and be the lead senate sponsor.

With significantly low statewide unemployment, it is becoming more and more difficult for almost all sectors of the economy to find and retain qualified workers. The intention of this legislation is to give superintendents and school boards more tools to attract and retain qualified teachers.

Under current law, there are a number of different pathways a person who has been educated and licensed to teach out of state can become licensed to teach in the state of Wisconsin. A person educated and licensed out of state can start teaching in Wisconsin with a 1 Year License with Stipulations. This license is renewable for a 2nd year. At this point the person has 2 years of teaching experience in the state of Wisconsin, but must go through additional requirements to advance to a Tier II Provisional License.

A person educated and licensed out of state, who also has one year of teaching experience in that state, can start teaching in Wisconsin with a License Based on Reciprocity. This is a 5 year license that can be renewed indefinitely. A person could teach their entire career in Wisconsin by renewing this license. However, there is no pathway to advance to a Tier II Provisional License.

This bill would continue to allow a person who is educated and licensed out of state to begin teaching in Wisconsin with a 1 Year License with Stipulations. After two successful semesters, that person would then be eligible for a License Based on Reciprocity if their teaching experience was deemed successful by the district.

Furthermore, this bill would move the License Based on Reciprocity to a Tier II Provisional License. This recognizes that all persons with significant in state teaching experience should have a similar pathway to additional licensure.

This bill is a common sense approach that would remove unnecessary, and often frustrating, obstacles for qualified persons who want to teach in Wisconsin at a time when the demand for their services is very high.

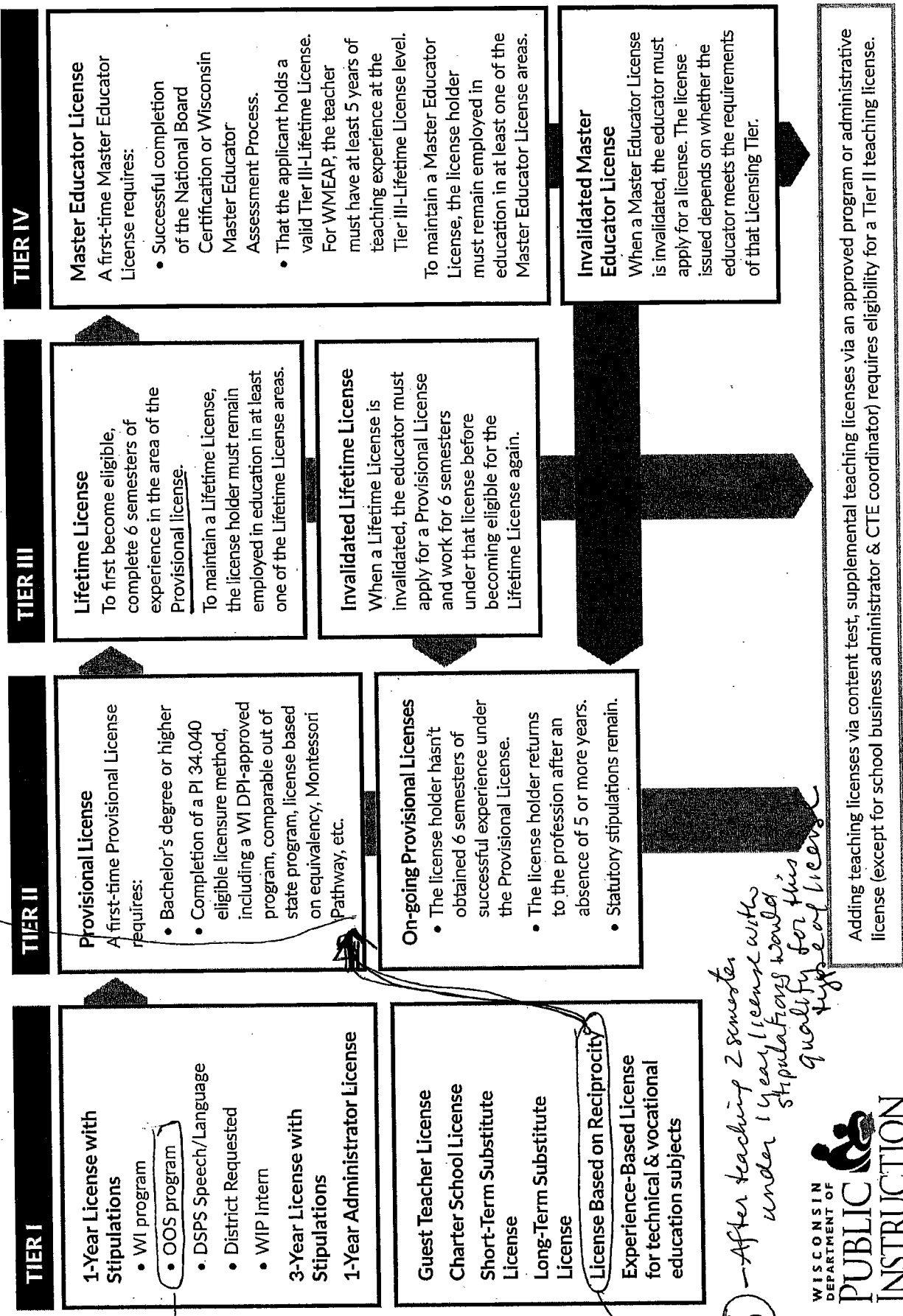
Your support for Senate Bill 184 would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you

A Teach under this for 2 semesters

C The bill makes a license based on reciprocity a "provisional license"

Wisconsin Licensing System for Teachers, Pupil Services, and Administrators



B After teaching 2 semesters under 1 year license with stipulations would qualify for this type of license



LAKESHIA MYERS

Wisconsin State Representative • 12th Assembly District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Rep. LaKeshia Myers' Testimony Regarding AB 195/SB184 Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Good Morning members of the Senate Education Committee:

I submit this testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 195/Senate Bill 184, which outlines changes for Licenses Based on Reciprocity. This legislation is personal to me, as I am a Wisconsin teacher that has a license based on reciprocity. Having earned my teacher certification outside of Wisconsin, and then returning to the state seeking employment, I was amazed that my extensive experience and education only afforded me a five-year renewable license in Wisconsin. The current law, penalizes teachers who were educated outside Wisconsin and makes it impossible for upward mobility as an educator. In my case, I was told that in order to have my administrator license honored in Wisconsin, I would have to, "find a Wisconsin college that would be willing to endorse me for licensure"—which was an impossible task, as I had returned to the state with an earned doctorate degree and had already taken all necessary coursework.

As a state, we know that we desperately need highly qualified and certified teachers and AB 195/SB184 would allow us to attract and retain teachers to our state. It also opens up the opportunities for teachers who earned credentials elsewhere to become eligible for lifetime licenses in Wisconsin after six successful semesters (three years) of teaching in our state. Lifetime licensure is a tool that should be used to attract and retain qualified personnel to live and teach in Wisconsin.

As an educator who has had to navigate the murky process of licensure based on reciprocity I understand how discouraging the process can be and what passing AB195/SB184 would mean for teachers in this situation. I thank Representative Tranel and Senators Marklein and Kooyenga for their foresight on this issue and for collaborating with me to ensure that we get movement on AB195/SB184.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation and help us do more to attract and retain qualified educators to serve in Wisconsin classrooms.



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

September 17, 2019 Senate Committee on Education Testimony on Senate Bill 184

Good morning!

Thank you Chair Olsen and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 184 (SB 184), which makes changes to the license to teach based on reciprocity. Representative Tranel and I drafted this bill based on conversations with superintendents in our districts.

This bill makes three key changes for individuals educated outside of Wisconsin and the License Based on Reciprocity.

- 1) For someone who completes their teacher education outside Wisconsin, but did not teach in the other state, they would be able to teach under a 1-year License with Stipulations. After two successful semesters of teaching under that license they would be eligible for a License Based on Reciprocity.
- 2) The License Based on Reciprocity, which is available to someone who was educated and licensed to teach outside Wisconsin, would become a provisional license. If the individual successfully completes six semesters (as defined by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI)) of teaching under the provisional license, they become eligible for a Lifetime License.
- 3) Individuals currently teaching with a License Based on Reciprocity would be granted a provisional license after this bill passes.

Under current law, the License Based on Reciprocity is a five year license, with no limit on the number of times it can be renewed. Someone could teach their entire career in Wisconsin under this license. However, there is no pathway to advance to a Provisional License.

My district covers a large portion of southwestern Wisconsin, bordering both Illinois and Iowa. Teachers from these rural communities may go to school out of state, but want to come back home to teach after they graduate. As I have talked with the superintendents in my districts, there is a shortage of qualified applicants. We should not be discouraging otherwise qualified teaching candidates, because of where they completed their teaching credentials.

The Assembly companion bill has a technical amendment, so that these provisions also apply to a teacher holding a DPI license or permit, but is teaching in a private school. It also allows a cooperative educational service agency (CESA) or a private school to notify DPI that the person successfully completed two semesters, as defined by DPI rule.

This bill is a common sense approach that would remove unnecessary, and often frustrating, obstacles for qualified persons who want to teach in Wisconsin at a time when the demand for their services is very high.

SB 184 is supported by the following groups:

- Association of Wisconsin School Administrators
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials
- Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
- Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators
- Wisconsin Council for Administrators of Special Services

Thank you again for hearing SB 184, and your timely action on the bill.

Senate Committee on Education
September 17, 2019

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Information on 2019 Senate Bill 184**

Description of Senate Bill 184:

This bill requires the Department of Public Instruction to issue a provisional license to teach based on reciprocity to an individual who holds a license to teach in good standing from another state if the individual taught in Wisconsin under a license or permit issued by the department for at least two semesters and the school district or charter school where the applicant taught under that license or permit confirms that the applicant's teaching experience was successful.

The bill also changes a license to teach based on reciprocity from an initial license to a provisional license. Under the bill, the department must issue a lifetime license to an individual who obtains a provisional license to teach based on reciprocity if the individual successfully completes six semesters of teaching experience, as defined by the department.

Finally, the bill specifies that the department must issue a provisional license to teach to any individual who holds an initial license to teach based on reciprocity on the date the bill becomes law.

Background:

2015 WI Act 55 (2015-17 State Budget) required the department to grant an initial license based on reciprocity to an individual who satisfied the following:

1. The individual holds a license to teach granted by the proper authority of another state and is in good standing with the proper authority of that state.
2. The individual taught for at least one year under the license granted by another state.
3. The individual has received an offer of employment to teach in a school located in this state.

2017 WI Act 59 (2017-19 State Budget) further changed 2015 Act 55 provisions by repealing the requirement that a teacher or administrator must have received an offer of employment to teach in a school located in this state in order to qualify for a teacher license or an administrator's license based on licensure in another state.

Following the enactment of 2015 WI Act 55, the department has issued the following number of Teacher and Administrator Licenses Based on Reciprocity:

Year	Teacher	Administrator
2015-16	108	5
2016-17	220	11
2017-18	514	36
2018-19	409	26

Wisconsin Teacher Shortage

Wisconsin public schools, like many schools across the country, are facing teacher shortages. Fewer students are pursuing education as a career, and Wisconsin districts are reporting increasingly shallow applicant pools for a variety of positions. Certain disciplines, as well as certain areas of the state, have critical shortage levels. Addressing these shortages, while attracting, developing, and retaining top talent, is one of the most critical public policy issues facing our state.

The department is pursuing multiple strategies to address the educator workforce shortage, including the Talent Development Initiative focused on recruiting, retaining, and developing Wisconsin's world class education workforce. We have also convened a working group on school staffing issues. The working group identified several key staffing problems facing schools across the state, including chronic staffing shortages across many disciplines; fewer applications for available positions; fewer standout candidates in applicant pools; substantial veteran staff retirements and less age diversity among staff; and difficulty retaining experienced educators in high-demand fields. In addition, members recognized that rural schools are shorthanded everywhere, and rural staff members must increasingly assume additional roles in order to function.

As part of our efforts to address this shortage, the department is also engaged in a task force with the University of Wisconsin System. The task force is examining how the University of Wisconsin System can work with stakeholders to improve college affordability, reduce student loan debt, and address teacher workforce shortages in Wisconsin, as well as increase access to teacher education and school leadership programs in the UW System.

The department looks forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders and the Legislature on the educator shortage our schools are facing while maintaining the high quality of our educators so all Wisconsin children have access to the classrooms they need.

Good day. My name is Donna Hejtmanek and I am a retired reading specialist and special education teacher. I served on the Dyslexia Study Committee, the Read to Lead Council, and currently I am the Legislative Chair for the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Wisconsin. IDA-WI opposes AB 194/195 and SB183/184 for the following reasons.

We oppose these bills for the following reasons.

1. These bills undermine the original intent of the FORT to ensure teachers have the knowledge to teach reading.
2. Special education teachers are largely, **if not solely** responsible for teaching reading to their students.
3. The bill describes the course of study as rigorous and to be taught by a reading expert. What defines rigorous and reading expert?
4. Out of state teachers have an advantage over in state teachers and are exempt from the test.

IDA-WI urges you to reject these bills as written. We see these bills being fast tracked in spite of their shortfalls. If there is no stopping this train, we would want the following amendments to be added.

5. There should be a trial period of 3 years to judge whether the yet to be determined "rigorous course" is in fact teaching teachers all the content that is on the FORT. These students will take the FORT for data collection purposes to assure that the content of the course is meeting the standards of the FORT. Teachers

completing the course of study successfully will be granted a Tier II license regardless of whether they passed or failed the FORT, but the passage rates will be valuable data to determine if the course of study is effective and if the alternate path should be made permanent. The passage score will remain at the current score of 240.

6. To make this course of study rigorous, the content will be aligned with the standards of two major professional reading organizations in the United States: The International Literacy Association and the International Dyslexia Association. Presently the 10 teaching standards used in Wisconsin are not reading specific but general professional standards.

<https://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/programs/standards/teacher>.

7. The course will include a supervised experience or practicum over one year teaching struggling readers. This should include two main categories of struggling readers; those with word recognition and those with language comprehension issues.

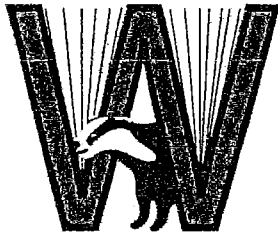
The course will be supervised by an individual who has passed the FORT and is licensed as a WI reading teacher or reading specialist.

Additionally, those certified from the Academic Language Therapy

Association (ALTA), The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) or the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE) will also be qualified to teach this course of study.

Finally, the Foundations of Reading Test since its implementation in 2015 has been diluted by creating broad exemptions from the WI- FOR. Senators, are any of you concerned that teachers have only a 68% first time passage rate? IDA- WI is asking that a task force be formed to examine the root causes for these low passage rates and the effect this has on Wisconsin teachers and students. We ask that a task force of teachers, school district administrators, schools of higher education and DPI come to the table to discuss WHY Wisconsin continues to fail its teachers and students.

It is time for you the legislators to stop reducing the content standards of the FORT and start looking at the schools of higher education, asking hard questions, and put reading first for the students of Wisconsin. Thank you for your attention.



**Wisconsin Reading Coalition OPPOSES new exemptions from the
Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test (WI-FORT)
as proposed in SB 183/AB 194 and SB 184/AB 195**

When the WI-FORT requirement was passed by the legislature in 2011, it had two goals:

1. To indirectly encourage educator preparation programs to improve reading coursework to include the critical content knowledge and teaching skills tested on the WI-FORT
2. To ensure that beginning and struggling readers have a teacher with sufficient knowledge of language structure and reading acquisition to be able to successfully teach them

We have largely failed Goal 1: The first time passage rate on the WI-FORT each year has been between 66 and 68%, and many teaching candidates have taken the exam numerous times before passing, indicating that educator preparation programs have not sufficiently updated their reading coursework. DPI has not required any changes, and the public is generally unaware due to lack of compliance with the legal requirement for colleges and DPI to post WI-FORT passage rates annually.

Let's STOP failing Goal 2 - and our beginning and struggling readers - by discontinuing the expanding series of exemptions from the WI-FORT: Our schools are being flooded with unqualified teachers of reading who have not had to pass the FORT because of the loopholes listed below. ***Students are suffering.*** Reading scores have declined on both state and national tests. Forward test results released this week show 59.2% of students in Grades 3-8 are not proficient readers. Among special education students, that rises to 88.4%. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress shows 76% of Wisconsin students in special education are so low as to be classified illiterate. This is a time for raising standards, not lowering them.

Already existing loopholes to the WI-FORT:

- *Created by the legislature:* An individual who completed teacher training through the online American Board program is entitled to become fully-licensed (Tier II) without taking the WI-FORT. Wis. Stats. 118.197

- *Created by the legislature:* Out-of-state teachers with one year of experience are entitled to be fully licensed (Tier II) without taking the WI-FORT. Wis. Stats. 118.193(2)
- *Created by DPI with legislative oversight:* Any teacher may get a Tier I license and take full responsibility for students without passing the WI-FORT. For all teachers except special educators, Tier I licenses are infinitely renewable. Special education teachers currently may teach under a Tier I license for three years. This three-year restriction, which SB 183/AB 194 aims to avoid, is due to federal requirements that special education teachers be highly qualified. DPI PI 34.028

The new proposals to avoid the WI-FORT:

SB 183/AB 194 allows special education teachers – who are responsible for the most vulnerable children - to obtain a full license (Tier II) without passing the WI-FORT if they take a “rigorous” course in reading from an “expert.” As the bill is written, there are no specifics on the content of the course, how to ensure expertise of the persons teaching the course, or how to objectively evaluate the course outcomes.

This new “rigorous” course is likely to be merely a renamed version of existing college reading courses, which already claim to teach the five components of reading. Reading “experts” should at a minimum have passed the WI-FORT themselves or have extensive documented experience *successfully* teaching struggling students to be proficient readers. Something more objective than a portfolio is required to determine whether a special education teacher is highly qualified. Ironically, if the required course were truly rigorous, the graduates would have no problem passing the WI-FORT.

SB 184/AB195 allows a prospective teacher educated out-of-state to become fully licensed (Tier II) without passing the FORT, even if s/he has no teaching experience. There is no explanation as to why someone educated over the border in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, or Michigan should be treated more leniently than someone educated in Wisconsin, especially when Wisconsin has no control over what kind of reading coursework is required in those out-of-state preparation programs. Tier I licenses are already available to out-of-state teachers who cannot pass the WI-FORT, just as they are for in-state teachers.

The weak arguments made in support of SB 183 and SB 184:

- *Wisconsin has a teacher shortage that requires eliminating quality control measures in order to get more bodies in the classroom.* While true emergency shortages no doubt exist in some subject areas and some geographic locations, districts should be required to show that they searched, but found no qualified candidates. There should also be a

limit on the time that individuals can be responsible for teaching beginning and struggling readers before proving their competence by passing the WI-FORT.

- *Wisconsin's passage rates on the WI-FORT are as good as or better than those in Massachusetts, which has the highest elementary student reading scores in the nation.* Massachusetts admits they have also had difficulty encouraging institutions of higher education to improve their reading coursework. The difference is that Massachusetts does not give teaching licenses to individuals who fail their test. Thus, they are meeting Goal 2, which provides students with qualified teachers, and they are able to maintain their number one national ranking in student reading performance.
- *Some college students are not good test takers, so they shouldn't be judged on their WI-FORT scores.* Students have to pass many high stakes tests to get into college and to pass their courses. Just as on the ACT, SAT, GRE, LSAT, or MCAT, reasonable accommodations should be available for individuals who have documented learning or psychological problems that make testing difficult.
- *Studying for the WI-FORT is a waste of time because it involves rote memorization of terms that will have little meaning in the actual classroom.* The only reason that students are having to cram for the WI-FORT is that their college reading courses were not adequate. The material tested on the WI-FORT is basic, foundational knowledge about reading that is essential for successful teaching. If it is unfair to have students suffer the consequences of educator preparation program failures, thought should be given to recourse against those institutions or demands that they do better.
- *The WI-FORT does not measure qualities of a good teacher such as rapport with students, families, and colleagues, work ethic, or community involvement.* The WI-FORT is not meant to be the sole determiner of who districts hire. However, it does set a floor in the area of sufficient knowledge about reading to teach beginning and struggling readers.
- *Special education teachers are not primarily responsible for teaching reading to special education students, and therefore should not be held to a higher standard than general education teachers (a recent DPI argument).* Legally, special education teachers are responsible for implementing the IEP's of their students, whether that involves pull-out instruction, support in the general classroom, or both. They need to have deep knowledge of reading in order to teach their children and to advise classroom teachers on appropriate instructional practices and accommodations.