



BARBARA DITTRICH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

January 4, 2024

Assembly Committee on Education

Rep. Dittrich Testimony on AB 639 – issuing a license to teach based on equivalency and granting rule-making authority.

Thank you Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education for taking testimony on this important legislation today. As a mother who has tried a variety of educational styles and venues, I have learned that not only does one size NOT fit all when it comes to students and learning methods, but one method of licensure does not fit every teacher. This legislation codifies a Department of Instruction (DPI) pathway, which had been previously implemented in administrative code, into statute that allows for more teachers to receive a license without having to spend additional time out of their very busy days studying to take a class.

This bill reinstates the licensed based on experience (LBE) program allowing qualified individuals the opportunity to give back to the next generation without changing any element of the DPI program that was previously in administrative code per the DPI website (under sole DPI discretion). Rather it would move the language from administrative code to statute, allowing for legislative oversight in law. One of the benefits of this pathway is allowing prospective teachers the ability to learn from veteran teachers, not unlike the apprenticeship programs championed in so many careers around our state, including teaching (a bill this governor fully supported and signed into law).

In order to qualify under this program an individual must meet the following simple requirements:

1. Hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant area.
2. Complete at least six semesters of teaching experience, which may include experience in a public school, private school, postsecondary institution, or industry setting.
3. Pass a DPI approved performance based assessment

Upon completion of this pathway, a teacher receives a provisional teaching license.

In a time of teacher shortages, I believe this bill will provide for more teachers entering the field, allowing for smaller class sizes and an overall improvement in our K-12 academic environment

in our state. Additionally, it will also relieve financial burdens on individuals seeking to gain their license that have already obtained a bachelor's degree in a different field.

It is my sincere hope this legislation will be implemented and we can clear up bureaucratic confusion, ensuring we have a robust workforce of teachers in our state.

BARBARA DITTRICH

State Representative - 2019-2021

January 2, 2019

Assembly Committee on Education

Re: HB 1000 - Teacher Licensure Reform Act of 2019

I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the provisions of the bill with you. I have reviewed the bill and believe it is a significant step towards addressing the challenges facing our education system. The bill provides a clear path for individuals who have already obtained a bachelor's degree in a different field to become licensed teachers. This will help to address the shortage of teachers in our state and provide a more streamlined process for licensure. I believe this bill is a positive step and I support its passage.

The bill also addresses the financial burdens on individuals seeking to gain their license. By providing a more streamlined process, the bill will help to reduce the costs associated with licensure. This is a significant benefit for individuals who are already facing financial challenges. I believe this bill is a positive step and I support its passage.

In order to ensure the bill is implemented effectively, I recommend the following steps:

1. Hold a public hearing to gather input from stakeholders.
2. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to ensure the bill is financially sound.
3. Provide training and support for individuals seeking licensure.

I am confident that the bill will be implemented successfully and will provide a more streamlined process for licensure. I believe this bill is a positive step and I support its passage.



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

DAN KNODL

STATE SENATOR • 8TH DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 639

Public Testimony

Assembly Committee on Education

January 4, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and members of this committee, for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 639.

The teaching profession is not immune to the critical labor shortage that our state is facing. Consequently, it is essential that we preserve the pathways to licensure that help us place qualified, talented teachers in classrooms.

The License Based Equivalency (LBE) pathway allows individuals with valuable career experience either in teaching or in a particular field to apply those skills in the classroom with a provisional teaching license. To qualify, the applicant must have a bachelor's degree, at least six semesters of teaching experience, and complete a standards-based assessment program and an assessment on communication skills, subject area content, pedagogy, and reading. The teaching experience under this pathway may include public, private, postsecondary, or industrial settings. This can be especially valuable for recruiting teachers in the trades.

This pathway previously existed in DPI's administrative code until August 1, 2022. This bill restores this pathway in our state statutes as it existed before its removal.

I would like to thank Representative Dittrich for identifying this legislative need and for her work on it in the Assembly. Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposed legislation, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



January 4, 2024

Assembly Committee on Education

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 639**

Thank you, Chairperson Kitchens and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud, Director of the Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development Team at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). With me today is Tom McCarthy, Associate Deputy State Superintendent for DPI. We are here to testify in opposition to 2023 Assembly Bill 639 (AB 639).

AB 639 would create a new license pathway in statute that appears to mirror a pathway the department retired in 2022 titled License Based on Equivalency (LBE). The handful of applicants in that pathway were notified that they had until August 2023 to either complete the pathway or move to another pathway to licensure.

The LBE pathway was created in 2013 under a provision in the Wisconsin Administrative Code, PI 34, that allowed the state superintendent to authorize a standards-based training or assessment program. This provision continues to exist under PI 34.040(2)(h).

The LBE pathway was retired in 2022 because it was ineffective in bringing career changers into the profession and because clearer, more effective options become available in statute and through the 2018 repeal and recreation of PI 34. Over almost a decade, from 2013 to 2022, only 74 licenses were issued under the LBE pathway. For context, the department processed over 36,000 licenses applications just last year.

More productive options now exist that are less burdensome for career changers to complete and are a more effective pathway to licensure, including:

- Wisconsin Statutes §118.197. This is the alternative preparation program offered by the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE). This is an online only program that takes seven to ten months to complete on average. The only eligibility requirement is that an individual holds a bachelor's degree.
- Wisconsin Statutes §118.191. This is the experience-based license for technical and vocational education subjects. Applicants total their experiences to determine if they meet a 100-point criterion in statute for a vocational or technical education license.
- PI 34.028. This is the one-year license with stipulations that may be renewed as an applicant completes progress towards the full Tier II license. The applicant must possess a bachelor's degree.

It is unclear as to who would want to pursue a path outlined under AB 639 when there is no instructional support for the applicant. The applicant would be required to come in with six semesters of teaching experience and pass a high-stakes exam. More immediate and likely completion is assured under the other license pathways mentioned in this testimony. For instance, someone could today get a license to teach immediately on a one-year license with stipulations and complete ABCTE within that year resulting in a full Tier II license, or get a license immediately to teach a vocational or technical course based on experience, or get a license to teach immediately on a renewable one-year license with stipulations while they complete outstanding requirements for a full Tier II license through an approved program.

As drafted, AB 639, would create a new license pathway under a new statutory provision, §118.1913, that is exempted from the statutory requirements passed by the Legislature, including the Foundations of Reading Test (FORT), requirements under 2023 Wisconsin Act 20, and instruction in the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin to name a few. There are no restrictions under the bill on which teaching licenses could be acquired through this pathway under the bill.

AB 639 is unimplementable as drafted. The prior LBE pathway included multiple assessments to cover both content knowledge and pedagogy, as well as any state required tests and statutory requirements. AB 639 would direct the department to approve an assessment, which means one, that covers communication skills, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and reading. It will be difficult to find an assessment, if one exists, that covers all of these areas for the grade spans and license areas authorized under the law. Further, it is unclear what an assessment program would look like when there is only one assessment allowed for under the bill. The timelines contained in this bill are not possible given the steps needed in the administrative rule process and time it would take to draft a proposed permanent rule. A permanent rule cannot be submitted to the Legislature for consideration after the last day of the general business floor period, which is April 11, 2024.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you have questions following this hearing or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at Kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or call (608) 264-6716.



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 639

January 4, 2023

Chairman Kitchens, Vice-Chair Dittrich, and members of the committee,

My name is Cory Brewer, and I serve as Education Counsel at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, a law and policy center based in Milwaukee. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of AB 639 which would create an alternative teacher licensure pathway.

This comes at a time when Wisconsin school districts are struggling to find qualified teachers to fill vacant positions. Enrollment in traditional Educator Preparatory Programs (EPPs) in Wisconsin fell by at least 30% between 2009 and 2017.ⁱ Not all who enroll will complete the program. Just in Southeast Wisconsin, the number of completed education degrees and certificates fell by 12.9% between 2011 to 2019. Of those who complete the program, some will not ultimately receive a license. In 2017, almost 20% of completers did not receive a teaching license.ⁱⁱ

The declining teacher pipeline through traditional EPPs has caused a shortage that is hurting our school districts and students. In Wisconsin, there have been teacher shortages in multiple subject areas, including math, science, and reading, for all grades since 2007,ⁱⁱⁱ and about 14% of middle and high school classes are taught by a teacher who is not trained to teach the subject—a problem more often seen both in Milwaukee and rural counties.^{iv} The National School Boards Association has reported that 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years.^v

Wisconsin must offer alternative pathways to licensure that can help rebuild our teacher pipeline. This bill, by offering a license based on equivalency, is an important step towards doing just that.

Many people would be great teachers due to their professional experience and are interested in entering the teaching profession. In Wisconsin, private schools participating in a parental choice program are not required to hire licensed teachers yet choice students consistently have better outcomes than their public school peers.^{vi} Despite years of professional experience in their subject areas and positive student outcomes, these teachers could not go on to work in a public school without taking on the significant financial barrier and time commitment to complete a certification or graduate degree program. Allowing licensure after six semesters of teaching experience would remove this barrier for qualified individuals to have more freedom within the teaching profession.

This bill would also reduce hurdles for out-of-state teachers who want to work in Wisconsin. Each state has different requirements that a candidate must meet to transfer their license. While there is a pathway to licensure in Wisconsin through reciprocity, the candidate must prove that their education and licensure requirements are similar to those here through a burdensome application process. Even if a candidate decides to go through the application process, there is no

guarantee that their state license will meet Wisconsin standards. An alternative equivalency pathway offers the ability for teachers to continue teaching knowing that they will eventually earn a Wisconsin license and be able to teach in any setting they desire.

This bill, by creating an alternative pathway to teacher licensure, will begin to alleviate Wisconsin's teacher shortage issue and we urge the committee to support it. Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-teacher-recruitment-and-retention-2022/>

ⁱⁱ <https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TeacherLicensure2021.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/reports>

^{iv} <https://www.wpr.org/listen/522641>

^v <https://www.nsba.org/ASBJ/Issues/October/Teacher-Retention>

^{vi} <https://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/2023/08/31/school-choice-wisconsin-delivers-students-taxpayers/70703561007/>; <https://will-law.org/apples-to-apples-2023/>

Written Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 639

Committee on Education

Assembly January 4, 2024

Dear Chairman Kitchens and esteemed members of the Assembly Committee on Education:

On Behalf of School Choice Wisconsin Action and the 383 private schools participating in one of four parent choice programs in Wisconsin, I would like to express our support for Assembly Bill 639 relating to issuing a license to teach based on equivalency and granting rulemaking authority authored by Representative Barb Dittrich and Senator Dan Knodl.

My name is Nicholas Kelly, and I am the President of School Choice Wisconsin. Prior to joining SCW, I served as Principal of St. Thomas More High School in Milwaukee. I hold a Master of Arts degree in Secondary Education and Educational Leadership from Cardinal Stritch University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. I am a past recipient of the prestigious Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Principal Leadership Award.

I have a great deal of respect for educators and education professionals serving students and communities in public and private schools across Wisconsin. In fact, I hold a lifetime teaching license and a lifetime administrator license from the Department of Public Instruction. I spent a lot of time and money to earn these credentials; I don't dismiss their value or the cost of obtaining them.

Unfortunately, the number of individuals pursuing a traditional pathway to teaching is not able to keep up with the demand for quality educators in Wisconsin classrooms. AB 639 is one way the state can help address this shortage.

It is important to note that Wisconsin already has individuals with a bachelor's degree teaching in our schools. Private choice schools are but one example. In fact, last year the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction issued more than 3,000 emergency teacher licenses to allow non-licensed individuals to fill teaching vacancies.

At SCW/SCWA, we appreciate the flexibility current law allows private schools participating in a parental choice program in Wisconsin. It provides opportunities for private choice schools to hire mid-career professionals who wish to do something new and meaningful in their remaining working years.

We also recognize and respect the value of additional professional development to prepare educators for a career in teaching. That is why SCW/SCWA recently embarked on a partnership with Concordia University to help strengthen the skills and confidence of non-licensed educators that are teaching in

Written Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 639

Committee on Education

Assembly January 4, 2024

(page 2)

private choice schools. The innovative program provides an affordable and accessible pathway for professionals from a variety of backgrounds to earn a Concordia Teaching Certificate by completing an online program that combines experiential learning with one-on-one mentorship to arm aspiring teachers with the skills and tools – and education – needed to make a difference in the lives of students.

The educational marketplace is already adapting to provide opportunities to expand the teacher pipeline. Wisconsin can recognize this trend by embracing the flexibility and framework outlined in Assembly Bill 639 and provide a pathway for licensure that aligns with the modern workforce and employer demand.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at kelly@parentchoice.org or contact Amy Loudenberg, Director of Policy and Government Affairs at louderbeck@parentchoice.org if you have any questions or require additional information.

1/4/2024

Testimony on AB 639

My name is Sarah Havey. I first started teaching in the fall of 2019 at a choice school in Southeastern WI where I took on a long term substitute position. When we were in the throes of Covid, one of the other teachers at the school directly asked me why I didn't take the job full time for the next year, I told him that I felt unqualified. However, with a teacher shortage and uncertain times, I stayed because I wanted to help the kids. I have since proved I am qualified for my job but lack one component: possessing a license. As a full time teacher at a private school, a part time coach at a public school, and a full time mother, I would love to get my license a traditional way, but I just can't due to time and financial constraints. Instead, I am hoping that the state legislature can pass this bill to restore a pathway to licensure to help solve the teacher shortage in one simple way: testing and therefore licensing already experienced teachers in the classroom. By allowing DPI to implement this program, the legislature could ensure qualified teachers stay in the profession and encourage new qualified teachers to join our ranks. I am qualified, and I want the license to prove it.

The greatest indicator of student success in any classroom is the quality of the classroom teacher. Teacher effectiveness is a function of the unique blend of knowledge, skills, and values that each person brings to the profession. While high-quality educators are essential at every level, they are particularly important in elementary schools. Here, children build foundational ideas and skills that carry them into future schooling and adult life.

Many school districts are experiencing teacher shortages. Wisconsin alone is trending to lose almost 16% of its teachers each year. I am serving as a principal in a private Lutheran school in Oconomowoc. Our Missouri-Synod Lutheran Schools are showing a huge gap of over 500 administrators and teachers. Our preparatory institutions are graduating fewer and fewer eligible candidates each year - less than 90 in the Concordia University system nationwide. This trend is also seen in Wisconsin's public institutions with a drop of approximately 13% of students completing a degree in education.

However, many adults serving in a career are being inspired by the idea of shaping young minds and turning to teaching as a second, or even third, durable career (Rich, 2014). The lockdown of schools during Covid revealed to many that schools are in desperate need of quality educators that put children first. Most states require that teachers demonstrate strong content knowledge in their subjects, particularly at the secondary level. However, those seeking to teach elementary school may have more flexibility in terms of credentials.

On behalf of private school administrators of the South Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod I want to urge you to continue looking for pathways that allow people to enter into a teaching career with as few obstacles as possible.

I, for one, have benefitted from these open pathways. In 2012, I completed a teacher licensing program offered through Marian University. The benefits of this program included evening classes located within 30 minutes of my home taught by qualified and practicing educators, affordable costs, and practical information and experiences to prepare me for the classroom.

In 2022, I entered an administrative certification program through Educate-WI which was even more accessible to me than the program I attended through Marian. This was a year-long program in which I was attended online classes with a cohort of fellow students from around the state, all currently employed in education, all of whom were in public schools (I was the lone private school administrator). We were led by a practicing administrator working through specific projects that directly impacted the things we needed to know to be good administrators. We also had to have a current administrator to serve as our mentor which helped to bounce off ideas and learn from someone else's successes and challenges.

As this committee moves forward, I want to encourage you to continue to seek pathways that move adults efficiently into the classroom as they transition, perhaps, from another career. My colleagues and I are looking for people who have a heart for children with the right soft skills that we know would work well in classrooms, not necessarily someone who has a current teaching degree. We would love to see a program that gives a class or 2 on practical teaching ideas, and then a rigorous mentoring program to really help teachers become great teachers in the field!

There is also a great need to develop teacher aides - people without degrees who need an affordable pathway to earning a certificate to serve in a classroom as an aide. At \$15 an hour, so it's not like they're rolling in money for a college program and they need to work a lot of hours so they can make it.

Alayna

Thomas

Sofia

Sarah H