

ROBERT L. COWLES

Wisconsin State Senator, 2nd Senate District

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Testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 99

Senator Robert Cowles
Assembly Committee on Education
May 25th, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and Committee Members, for allowing me to testify today regarding Assembly Bill 99, which would extend eligibility for our teachers to achieve a lifetime teaching license.

Under current statutes, the state is allowed to issue lifetime teaching licenses. These licenses do not expire or require renewal; once an applicant receives their license and pays for it, it belongs to them for as long as they live.

However, under these statutes, if a teacher decides to leave the education system for a time, their lifetime license will expire if they are not “regularly employed in education” within five years. That requirement also applies to any teachers who go to work for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), meaning that they must return to the teaching profession within the five years, or face losing their lifetime license.

Assembly Bill 99 would change that law, broadening the statute of lifetime teaching licenses to include teachers employed by DPI. Under the bill, teachers wouldn’t have to worry about reapplying for their teaching license – or paying an additional fee for it – if they choose to work at DPI for a period of time, but might want to return to teaching.

Representative Sortwell and I worked with DPI to fix this glaring problem through this bill. Why should there be any complications for our teachers to reenter their profession after working for the Department of Public Instruction, the very state agency that oversees our schools?

I might not be a math teacher, but the numbers aren’t adding up to me. Assembly Bill 99 would simply erase an unnecessary regulation, and give support to our teachers in transitioning from one supporting role in our education system to another.

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Daniel Henderson, School Programs Coordinator



SUBJECT: AB-99 – Maintaining a lifetime teaching, administrator, or pupil services license

DATE: May 25, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on AB-99. The Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS) takes no position on AB-99. But we would like to address the committee on some important issues relating to lifetime licenses.

As you may know, WCRIS represents over 600 private schools and over 120,000 students in K-12 schools across the state. Many of those students are taught by Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licensed teachers. Indeed, many of our member jurisdictions require licensure, such as the five Catholic Dioceses. We support the expansion of pathways so teachers can earn a lifetime license.

As it currently stands, AB-99 only counts time worked at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) towards an educator's lifetime license. We need the inclusion of time worked at private schools' dioceses, synods, and jurisdictional central offices so they are treated like DPI agency service. Like DPI, these offices provide a similar oversight function for private schools.

WCRIS has worked with the bill's author. An amendment has been drafted that does include employment in a private school's diocese, synod, or jurisdictional central office to count towards the lifetime license requirements.

The idea is that someone should not be punished or disadvantaged in the pursuit of years of service needed for a lifetime license simply because the teacher tried administrative work and decided to return to teaching.

Further, many of our teaching staff move in and out of the public school systems throughout the course of their careers and could be affected by their current exclusion. We need to make licensure more obtainable, not less. We are requesting this simple tweak, which will accomplish that goal.

In summary, WCRIS is in support of the amendment and would be in favor of AB-99 if the amendment is adopted. We urge the committee to adopt the amendment to include private schools' dioceses, synods, or jurisdictional central offices.

Please notify WCRIS if we can be of further assistance. I am happy to answer questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian
Schools International

Christian Schools
International

Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

Diocese of Superior

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
North Wisconsin District

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference
of Seventh Day Adventists

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Northern Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Western Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
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May 25, 2023

**Assembly Committee on Education
Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 99**

I want to thank Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to give written testimony on Assembly Bill 99 (AB 99). My name is Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

DPI's position on AB 99 is neutral.

Under this bill, for purposes of determining whether to invalidate a lifetime teaching, administrator, or pupil services license, DPI must count time an individual is employed by DPI as time the individual is regularly employed in education.

This bill would simply codify in statute a practice that is already in place under PI 34, as the rule considers employment at the department to count as being employed in education for purposes of maintaining a lifetime license.

DPI is not aware of any situations in which an individual's license has been revoked because of employment at the DPI not being considered employed in education.

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