

September 18, 2017

Governor Scott Walker
111 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

To the Honorable Governor Scott Walker:

We are extremely concerned about a provision contained in the proposed state budget that mandates that Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction grant teaching licenses to graduates of a fast-paced, alternative certification program that lacks the quality-control requirements current teacher candidates must meet. This provision was item #45 in the omnibus education motion passed by the Joint Committee on Finance or Section 1524g of the final bill passed by the legislature.

Although the provision does not explicitly specify a program by name, the measure is crafted to benefit the out-of-state American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE). We believe the Atlanta-based organization's curriculum falls significantly short in preparing future teachers for success in the classroom.

As leaders in the state committed to the training and education of our future teachers, we are urging you to remove this measure for two important reasons.

- First, ABCTE's online program lacks several crucial features of quality teacher preparation. Perhaps most notably, this provision **does not require student teaching or any other supervised field experiences**. This is noteworthy because one of the great strengths of teacher preparation programs across Wisconsin is the requirement that future teachers complete both a pre-student teaching experience and an entire semester of full-time student teaching under the mentorship of a cooperating teacher.

Similarly, the provision in the state budget would **exempt graduates of the ABCTE program from several additional quality-control requirements** that current teacher candidates must meet in Wisconsin -- including a rigorous assessment of overall knowledge and teaching ability, and a deep understanding of student learning.

- Second, if the intent of this provision is to open the teaching profession to a wider range of individuals, we want to make clear that **current educator preparation programs are actively implementing new and innovative pathways into the profession for career changers and paraprofessionals**. In some cases, people can even get paid to make a career switch into teaching. Both UW System and private institutions around Wisconsin, as well as approved alternative preparation programs, are leading such initiatives.

We are committed to innovative solutions and partnerships aimed at addressing Wisconsin's teacher shortages. Over the last year, Wisconsin teacher preparation programs, the PK-12 community and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction worked together to propose significant changes to the certification structure that will create flexibility in licensing while maintaining the necessary quality of teacher preparation.

As deans of schools and colleges of education and leaders of teacher education programs across this state, we believe that well-prepared teachers are a foundation of Wisconsin's investment in education. Teachers serve as catalysts of opportunity by helping children in every corner of the state realize the American Dream in Wisconsin. Efforts that will weaken this foundation will have a detrimental impact on our schools and the families and communities that depend on them.

For these reasons, we urge you to remove this provision from the state budget.

Sincerely,

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