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TESTIMONY

By

Dr. Rolf Wegenke, President

Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)

on

Senate Bill 230

to

Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges and Children and Families

August 27, 2019

Chair Kooyenga and members of the Committee, my name is Rolf Wegenke. I am President of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, or WAICU, the official organization recognized in state law as representing 24 private, nonprofit colleges and universities in Wisconsin and their 56,000 students.

I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 230. WAICU members have 18 teacher preparation programs among them. Each program is committed to preparing quality teachers for our schools.

WAICU and WAICU-members have been engaged with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in efforts to address teacher shortages. For the past several years, I have served as a member of the "State Superintendent's Leadership Group." The Leadership Group is working to address the declining enrollment in teacher education programs. The Leadership group, made up of DPI staff, school district administration, and public and private higher education leadership continues to brainstorm ways to encourage more individuals to enter the profession. Of course, the shortage of teachers is connected to Wisconsin's overall workforce shortages. For this reason, the issue of teacher shortages is also a focus of the major business groups in the state. Both WMC's Future Wisconsin Summit and the Wisconsin Technology Council are focusing on workforce shortage; I am honored to be participating in both.

SB 230 allows more flexibility for students to meet the practice teaching requirement. This flexibility is particularly important for degreed non-teaching professionals to complete a teacher-education program.

WAICU-members have for years offered high-quality, innovative teaching preparation programs. In June of this year, Alverno College announced that it is launching a new teacher licensure program in the fall, aimed at paraprofessionals who have an associate degree or at least 60 college credits. The new program can be completed in 24 months, and courses will be offered in the

evening and online. This additional flexibility will further benefit students participating in this program.

Edgewood College, here in Madison, offers an Accelerated Secondary Education Program (ASP) for individuals interested in teaching students in middle and high schools. This program is designed for working adults, for those making career changes and Emergency-Licensed (Tier 1) teachers already working in schools.

Wisconsin Lutheran College's Transition to Teaching program is designed for bachelor's degree graduates interested in transitioning to a career in teaching. In as little as two years, students can complete coursework for licensure, with only six additional credits to earn their Master of Arts degree. Also, for the seventh year in a row (since the 2011-12 academic year), 100 percent of their traditional undergraduate education majors have secured teaching jobs.

Senate Bill 230 provides additional opportunities for innovation but also maintains an appropriate role for DPI. Thank you for the opportunity to share information on WAICU-member initiatives to address teacher shortages. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families
August 27, 2019

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Support for 2019 Senate Bill 230

Description of Senate Bill 230:

This bill authorizes the state superintendent of public instruction to approve a teacher preparatory program if the program requires students to complete the equivalent of the student teaching required under current law, as determined by the state superintendent by rule. Under current law, the state superintendent may approve a teacher preparatory program only if students in the program are required to complete student teaching that consists of full days for a full semester at a cooperating elementary or secondary school. Current law further specifies that the hours, days, and semester of student teaching are determined based on the cooperating school's schedule.

Analysis of Senate Bill 230:

The goal of the bill is to provide educator preparation programs flexibility in designing high quality student teaching experiences that meet the needs of the students in their programs. With the declines in preparation program enrollments and the school staffing challenges we are facing, flexibility with student teaching would allow more non-traditional educator candidates to complete their programs. This would also help to diversify our educator workforce, as the non-traditional candidate population is generally more diverse.

It has been argued that a year-long student teaching experience may better prepare teachers because they get to experience the entire school year and the different things that happen during each part of the year. We are not recommending that all teachers be required to complete a year-long experience, but the bill would allow preparation programs to provide such an experience while still allowing the student teachers to be employed outside of student teaching or to not have to take on additional student debt.

This bill was not designed specifically for paraprofessionals, although there is a clear use case for preparation programs that target them. We have heard repeatedly from preparation programs that many paraprofessionals have not been able to complete student teaching because they cannot afford to stop working an entire semester. There is no prohibition in state law regarding paying student teachers, so districts should be able to address cases like this to help their paraprofessionals become fully licensed.

It should be noted that under Wis. Stat. sec. 118.19(3)(a) the state superintendent has the authority to accept the equivalent of full-day, full semester student teaching for candidates who are prepared outside of Wisconsin. SB 230 merely gives the state superintendent the same authority for instate candidates.

We believe that preparation programs and districts will develop innovative programs that will produce more educators for the state, including more educators of color, if given the flexibility to do so.



LAKESHIA MYERS

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HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Testimony in Support of SB 230: Teacher Preparatory Programs and Granting Rule-Making Authority

Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families

August 27, 2019

Chairman Kooyenga and members of the committee, thank you for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 232. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this bill.

In my experience as an educator in Wisconsin, I know firsthand the need for more teachers in Wisconsin. As of the 2016-2017 school year, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction published that Wisconsin has 60,649 public school teachers, which does not meet the current demand for teachers in Wisconsin.

Under the current state laws, the State Superintendent can only approve programs that have a student complete full days for a full semester in a classroom. This makes it difficult for paraprofessionals or other non-teaching professionals who already dedicate their lives to our students, to become certified classroom teachers. Paraprofessionals may not have the ability to leave their current positions in order to fulfill the current teaching education requirements.

The proposed legislation will help to expand the ability for paraprofessionals to become certified classroom teachers. Instead, paraprofessionals and non-teaching professionals can fulfill these teacher requirements by an alternative means. They would be allowed to meet these requirements during their school day or can also partner with local school district program.

Overall, the proposed bill will allowed for increased enrollment in teacher education programs, remove obstacles for paraprofessionals who want to become certified teachers, as well as helping those in Wisconsin who have already shown their commitment to Wisconsin children.

I am willing to work with the committee to support the increase of the number of certified teachers across our state. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.