



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Education
AB 611 - the Foundations of Reading Test Licensure Requirement

December 14, 2021

Chairperson Thiesfeldt and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 611, which relates to the Foundations of Reading Test licensure requirement. I appreciate your willingness to bring this bill forward.

Since January, 2014, our current statutes require individuals who want to teach grades K-5, special education, reading or reading specialist, or at a Montessori school, to pass the 2012 Foundations of Reading Test (FORT). The test is required for licensure and demonstrates a proficiency in this specific issue area.

However, the Administrator of FORT is updating the exam and effective August, 2022 they will no longer be using the 2012 test. Because our statutes explicitly require the 2012 test, we are in jeopardy of not being able to properly license teachers seeking to teach in these specific areas of their profession.

This legislation simply updates Wisconsin's statutory language to allow applicants to pass the 2012 version or the most recent edition of the FORT.

Once again, thank you for holding a public hearing on this important piece of legislation.



Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator · District 8

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Education

AB 611/SB 589: Foundations for Reading test

12/14/2021

Thank you committee members for hearing testimony on Assembly Bill 611/Senate Bill 589.

In order to qualify for a Provisional Educator License in Wisconsin for grades kindergarten to five you must pass the Foundations of Reading test (FORt). Current law specifically identifies the 2012 version of the FORt. Effective August 2022, the administrator of the FORt examination will no longer offer the 2012 version of the examination. This bill allows for passage of the most up to date version of the FORt be accepted to qualify for a teacher license.

It is important we move quickly on the bill so current prospective teachers know obtaining a license will not be jeopardized next year. Currently, over 20 states require a test that fully measures the candidate's knowledge of the science of reading. 8 of these states specifically use the FORt. It is vital we make sure our educators demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the science of reading instruction.

As Wisconsin continues to see low proficiency scores in reading now is not the time to go backwards by getting rid of the test. Thank you for taking the time to hear Assembly Bill 611/Senate Bill 589. I hope to count on your support for the important bill.



Assembly Committee on Education

December 14, 2021

Department of Public Instruction

Testimony in support of Assembly Bill 611 & Senate Bill 589

Thank you, Chair Thiesfeldt and members of the committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 611 (AB 611) and Senate Bill 589 (SB 589). This proposal provides a needed update to statutory provisions related the Foundations of Reading Test (FORT) requirement for educator licensure.

Background

2011 Wisconsin Act 166 made several changes to Wisconsin elementary and secondary education laws. One of the changes was a new statutory provision requiring the FORT based on recommendations of Governor Walker's Read to Lead Task Force. The statutory provision, s. 118.19 (14), Stats., prohibits DPI from issuing an initial teaching license that authorizes the holder to teach in grades kindergarten to five, in special education, as a reading teacher or as a reading specialist, unless the applicant has passed an examination identical to the FORT administered in 2012 as part of the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure.

The FORT is a test that was initially created by Pearson for Massachusetts. Effective January 31, 2014 it was required in Wisconsin statutes for teachers to teach grades 1-5, special education, and reading. The cut scores in Wisconsin are required by law to be set at a level no lower than that recommended by Pearson based on Wisconsin state standards.

An applicant must receive a passing score of 240 or higher on the Wisconsin FORT. Applicants for these Wisconsin licenses must pass the Foundations of Reading Test for Wisconsin:

- Regular education/elementary education
- Montessori
- Early childhood special education
- Cross-categorical special education
- Specific learning disabilities
- Emotional behavioral disabilities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Reading teacher
- Reading specialist.

Assembly Bill 611/ Senate Bill 589 - Analysis

This bill provides a needed update to s. 118.19 to allow DPI to issue an initial teaching license to an applicant that has passed an examination identical to the FORT administered in 2012 or the most recent version of the test. This updated is needed because Pearson has updated the 2012 Foundations of Reading Test. A new version of the test became available in July, 2021 and Pearson plans to discontinue the use of the 2012 version by Wisconsin in August 2022. The passage of AB 611/SB 589 will allow DPI to continue to properly license educators for the next school year and will provide certainty to prospective educators as they prepare for licensure.