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# PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 758

Assembly Committee on Education

January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important bill today.

AB 758 is a simple piece of legislation to improve 2017 Act 59 which created an alternative pathway for teacher licensure. The Act, allowed an applicant to receive an initial license to teach if they hold a bachelor's degree and completed an alternative teacher certification program.

Under statute, the alternative teacher certification program must be operated by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This bill simply eliminates the requirement that the program's operator must have nonprofit status.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Assembly Bill 758**  
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 758.

2017 Act 59 created an alternative teacher licensure pathway, which allows an applicant to receive an initial license to teach if they meet certain criteria. The first requirement is possession of a bachelor's degree. The second is completion of an alternative teacher certification program. Under state law, this program must be operated by a 501(c)3 nonprofit that operates in at least 5 states, has been operating for at least 10 years, and requires candidates to pass an examination in a subject area as well as a pedagogy exam.

This bill removes the requirement that the program's operator must have nonprofit status. Removing the requirement that an organization hold a non-profit status will open the field to more teacher certification programs. Similar to national trends, Wisconsin is experiencing a significant teacher shortage. Allowing more opportunities for mid-life career changes into the teaching profession will provide districts with more options when looking to fill vacancies. Alternative teacher certification programs provide districts with flexibility and allow for individuals with real-world experience to enter the profession. Since the enactment of this pathway, nearly 150 school districts across the state have hired over 1,300 teachers by utilizing this pathway.

The primary vehicle for this pathway has been an organization called the American Board for the Certification of Teaching Excellence. Individuals representing American Board are here today and will be able to speak to the many benefits that American Board has provided to schools in Wisconsin and the 13 other states where they operate.

I would like to thank Representative Snyder for leading this bill in the Assembly. Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposed legislation.



January 4, 2024

**Assembly Education Committee**

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
2023 Assembly Bill 758**

Thank you, Chairperson Kitchens and members of the committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony for information only on 2023 Assembly Bill 758 (AB 758).

Wisconsin Statutes §118.197 provides for an alternative preparation pathway for teachers that results in a full Tier II license if an individual:

- Holds a bachelor's degree, and
- Completed a program operated by a nonstock, nonprofit organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This organization must also operate in at least five states, been in operation for at least 10 years, and use an exam titled Professional Teaching Knowledge.

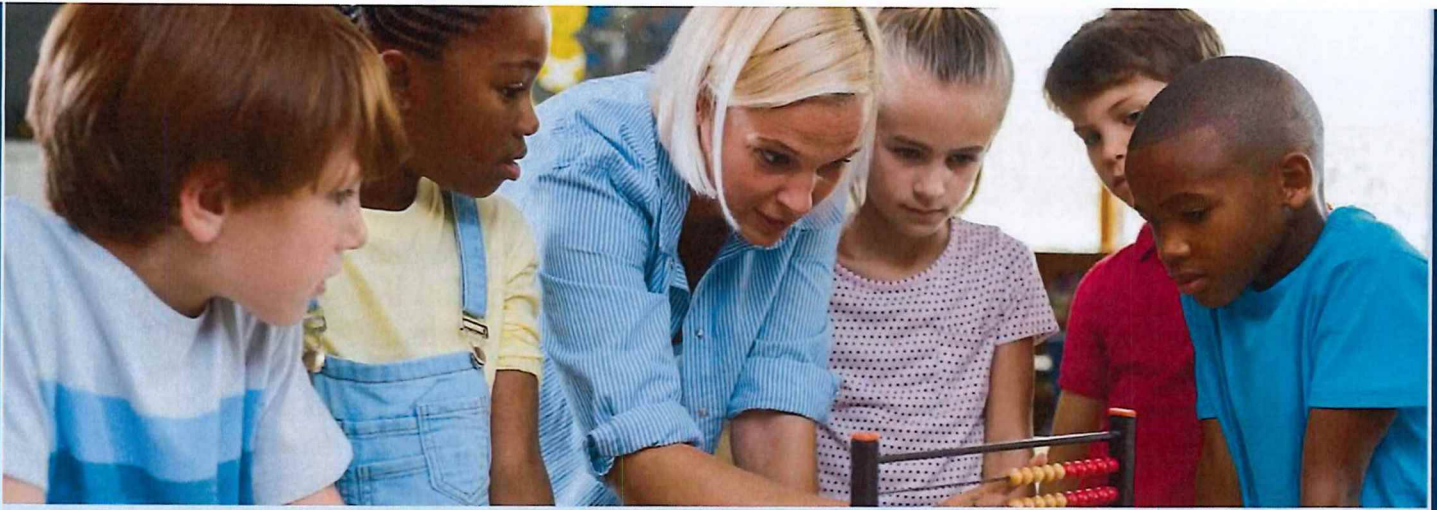
DPI does not have authority under statute to require an approval of the program or a review of the content of the program or exam used. The alternative preparation pathway is not required to comply with any other requirements for licensure as laid out in statute and administrative code, such as:

- Student teaching,
- Wisconsin teaching standards,
- Provisions of 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 related to reading,
- The Foundations of Reading Test (FORT), or
- Instruction in the history, culture, and sovereignty of federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin.

Only one organization has ever met the requirements under §118.197, the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE). ABCTE is an online only program with no student teaching and takes, on average, seven to 10 months to complete according to their website. In 2019-20 there were 138 people who completed this pathway, in 2020-21, 347 people, and in 2021-22, 296 people.

AB 758 would remove the statutory provision that an organization operating under §118.197 has a 501 (c)(3) status as a nonprofit, nonstock organization. Based on the IRS tax exempt organization search, ABCTE's federal tax-exempt status was automatically revoked for not filing a Form 990-series return or notice for three consecutive years. In light of this, the department has followed up with ABCTE to ascertain their status. ✖

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at [kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov) or (608) 264-6716.



# American Board Teacher Certification

American Board provides career changers with a quick and affordable route to become teachers. American Board's online teacher certification program is self-paced and includes robust online tutorials, but requires no additional college coursework or student teaching. The average American Board candidate earns their teaching certificate within eight months of enrolling, while many have become certified in as little as one or two months.

American Board helps communities supply their own teachers by providing a path for local community members who hold a bachelor's degree to get trained, licensed, and secure a job teaching in their local school.

American Board's vision is very simple — your community, your teachers.

## How does the program work?

### American Board teachers must

1. Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
2. Pass American Board's pedagogy exam which covers classroom management, assessment, and other professional teaching skills.
3. Select a subject area and demonstrate competency by passing the corresponding assessment.
4. Apply for initial teaching license through the state department of education.



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## Drexel University research study

Drexel University surveyed principals that employ American Board certified teachers to compare the performance of American Board teachers and traditionally prepared teachers. More than 150 principals from across 12 states participated.

**95%** of American Board teachers performed better than or equivalent to traditional, college-prepared teachers across 95% of teacher quality aspects

**97%** of principals **expected to retain** their American Board teacher(s) after the 3-year mark

### Drexel concluded:

"During this time when many under-served local communities are in need of a stable teaching force, the opportunity to attract both traditionally and alternatively prepared high-quality instructors seems exceptionally important. It is clear that ABCTE prepared teachers are well-prepared to meet the needs of 21st-century learners."

**American Board teachers are "largely comparable to or stronger than traditionally prepared teachers."**

## What principals say

"I value the ability [American Board] gives small rural communities (like ours) to grow your own teachers. Housing and jobs are hard to come by here, resulting in stagnant mobility and lack of applicants for open positions. [American Board] allows us the option to search within our own community to find individuals that are dedicated to students, have roots in the area and are willing to take the next step to becoming a teacher in Idaho."

**Superintendent**  
Midvale School District, Idaho

## What teachers say

"There's no other program I found that could help me become a teacher as quickly or as inexpensively as American Board."

**Teacher**  
Milwaukee Public Schools, Wisconsin

## American Board-Wisconsin

American Board has been working in Wisconsin since 2017 to provide a pathway to licensure for prospective teachers. Since that time, more than **1,300 Wisconsin teachers** have used American Board's program to become teachers in schools statewide. American Board has also formed partnerships with the Green Bay and Oshkosh Area School Districts to make the program even more affordable and help address the teacher shortage. American Board is committed to helping place teachers in Wisconsin classrooms.

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## School Districts with American Board Graduates:

Appleton Area School District	Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School
Aquinas Catholic Schools	Kettle Moraine School District
Assumption Catholic Schools	La Causa Charter School
Augusta Area School District	Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School
Barron Area School District	Lake Holcombe School District
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine School District	Lake Mills Area School District
Belmont Community School District	Lakeland Union High School District
Berlin Area School District	Laona School District
Big Foot High School District	Luck School District
Bowler School District	Luxemburg-Casco School District
Bristol School District #1	Madison Metropolitan School District
Carmen Schools of Science and Technology	Manitowoc Lutheran High School
Cassville School District	Manitowoc Public School District
Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area School District	Marion School District
Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District	Markesan District Schools
Columbus Catholic School	McDonell Area Catholic Schools
Darlington Community School District	Medford Area Public School District
De Soto Area Schools	Menominee Indian School District
Eau Claire Area School District	Merton Community Schools
Edgerton School District	Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District
Elkhorn Area School District	Milwaukee Public Schools
Ellsworth Community School District	Minocqua J1 School District
Elmbrook Schools	Monona Grove School District
Evansville Community School District	Necedah Schools
Fall River School District	Neenah Joint School District
Fond du Lac School District	Northwood School District
Frederic School District	Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District
Gillett School District	Oconomowoc Area School District
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School	Oconto Unified School District
Green Bay Area Public School District	One City Schools
Hayward Community School District	Oshkosh Area School District
Highland Community Schools	Our Redeemer Lutheran Church with School
Holy Cross Lutheran School	Peace Lutheran School
Hope Christian Schools	Pepin Area Schools
Hudson School District	Platteville School District
Iola-Scandinavia School District	Prairie du Chien Area School District
Iowa-Grant School District	Prairie Farm School District
Kenosha Unified School District	Racine Unified School District

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Randall Consolidated School J1  
Randolph School District  
Random Lake School District  
Redeemer Lutheran Church & School  
Ripon Area School District  
Rosendale-Brandon School District  
Saint Francis de Sales Parish Cluster & School  
Salem School District  
Sauk Prairie School District  
School District of Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan  
School District of Arcadia  
School District of Ashland  
School District of Auburndale  
School District of Baraboo  
School District of Bayfield  
School District of Beloit  
School District of Brown Deer  
School District of Crandon  
School District of Greenfield  
School District of Hilbert  
School District of Janesville  
School District of Jefferson  
School District of Lodi  
School District of Lomira  
School District of Loyal  
School District of Maple  
School District of Mauston  
School District of Mellen  
School District of Mishicot  
School District of Mondovi  
School District of New London  
School District of Osceola  
School District of Phillips  
School District of Pittsville  
School District of Rhinelander  
School District of River Falls  
School District of Spring Valley  
School District of Washburn  
School District of Wausaukee  
School District of Winter  
Sevastopol School District  
Sharon Joint School District  
Shawano School District  
Shining Star Christian Schools  
Silver Lake Joint No. 1 School District  
St Dennis School  
St John's Church & School  
St. Patrick Catholic Church and School  
Stockbridge School District  
Stoughton Area School District  
The Richardson School  
Tomorrow River Community Charter School  
Trinity Lutheran School  
Unified School District of Antigo  
Unified School District of De Pere  
Unity School District  
Verona Area School District  
Washington Island School District  
Watertown Unified School District  
Waupun Area School District  
Wausau School District  
Wautoma Area School District  
Wauwatosa School District  
West Allis-West Milwaukee School District  
West Bend School District  
Westby Area School District  
Weston School District  
White Lake School District  
Whitnall School District  
Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District  
Wonewoc-Union Center School District

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Hello, I'd first like to thank Chairman Kitchens and the committee members for allowing me to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 758 regarding alternative teacher certification programs. I would also like to thank Representative Snyder and Senator Knodl for their authorship of Assembly Bill 758 and Senate Bill 742. My name is Isabelle Welch, and I'm here representing American Board, a teacher preparation program that has been operating in Wisconsin since 2017. In that time, American Board has certified more than 1300 teachers who work in more than 140 school districts across Wisconsin.

First, I'd like to give you a little bit of history about our organization. American Board, founded by the **U.S. Department of Education** in 2001 under **President George W. Bush**, has been a national leader in alternative teacher certification for over two decades. We currently operate in 14 states, including Wisconsin, and have certified more than 16,000 teachers nationwide.

American Board provides local career professionals, who hold a bachelor's degree in a subject other than education, a quick and affordable pathway to teacher licensure.

Participants in American Board's program are an average of 39 years old and generally fall into one of four categories:

1. **Career changers** (these are your accountants who want to teach math, or your journalists who decide to teach English)
2. **Military Veterans and their spouses** (American Board is a national partner with the DOD SkillBridge program, and provides a discounted rate to veterans and their spouses)
3. **Stay-at-home parents transitioning to the workforce** (these are people who received their bachelor's degree, stayed home to raise their kids, and are now looking to reenter the workforce)
4. **Substitute teachers and paraprofessionals** (these are people already working in your schools who are looking to become fully licensed)

American Board's program provides a pathway for people to become teachers quickly and affordably. Our program currently costs around **\$1900 dollars**, and generally takes **less than 1** year to complete. The people who utilize our program are local members of your community who do not have the **time or the money** to complete a traditional certification program.

American Board's program consists of coursework and exams covering **subject area content and pedagogy**, the art and science of teaching. One thing that I would like to emphasize is that **50%** of American Board's program is **pedagogy**, and candidates must prove their competency

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by passing a pedagogy and content area exam before they can complete our program. Third-party studies show that American Board's content and pedagogy coursework is strongly aligned to university-based teacher preparation programs.

A third-party study done by Drexel University surveyed more than **150** school principals across **12** states and found that **97% retained** their American Board teachers past the critical three-year mark. For comparison, the national average of teacher retention at the three-year mark is **80%**. This is likely due to American Board's teachers having roots in the local community and bringing their previous workplace experience and maturity to the classroom. This study also found that American Board prepared teachers are equally strong or stronger than traditionally prepared teachers across 95% of evaluated teacher qualities, including classroom management, subject-matter knowledge, organizational training, communications, conflict resolution, collaboration, leadership, maturity, motivation, and appropriate behaviors.

American Board began operating in Wisconsin under Wisconsin Statute 118.197 and has certified more than 1300 teachers in the state. Our graduates are making significant contributions to school districts across Wisconsin, including the Green Bay Area Public schools, where we have a strong relationship and have certified over 50 teachers.

As American Board has grown and expanded into new states, we have come to realize that including language requiring nonprofit status is not essential and can hinder the growth of other reputable teacher certification programs. Removing the nonprofit requirement presents an opportunity for other quality teacher certification programs to thrive. This change aligns with our goal of promoting a fair and competitive environment that fosters innovation and quality in teacher certification and helps address statewide teacher shortages. Additionally, it is worth noting that none of the other states 13 in which American Board operates have such a nonprofit requirement, and we would like to have consistency in language across all states.

I would like to emphasize that this proposed change will not alter the way American Board operates or the high-quality service it provides. This change will also not decrease the quality of teacher preparation programs that can operate in Wisconsin but will allow for other reputable organizations to enter the market.

In conclusion, I urge this committee to consider the positive impact that removing the nonprofit requirement from the bill can have on the education landscape in Wisconsin. This change will not only benefit organizations like the American Board but will also pave the way for other respectable teacher certification programs to contribute to the development of high-quality educators in the state. In closing, I would like to request this committee's support of Assembly Bill 758. Thank you for your time and consideration.