

TO: Members, Assembly Education Committee

FROM: Sharon L. Schmeling, Executive Director

DATE: May 30, 2019

RE: Assembly Bill 195 – License to teach based on reciprocity

Thank you for taking on the issue of teacher licensure, which is complicated and has become a barrier for entry into the teaching profession. The entire licensing process would benefit from subject matter hearings hosted by your committee so the various stakeholders in teacher licensure could collaboratively wrestle with how to improve the process so as to improve the pipeline of teachers.

The Wisconsin Council of Religious & Independent Schools (WCRIS) represents 800 schools across the state. The vast majority of our 6,000 teachers are licensed. While most of our private schools require licensure, those that don't often still employ licensed teachers because the teachers themselves have chosen to be licensed as part of their professional practice.

Most of our teachers hold licenses from Wisconsin, but many also have licenses from religiously-affiliated colleges and universities from around the country.

Our teachers move between the public and private school systems so their ability to navigate the licensure process is important to the pipeline that supplies licensed teachers in Wisconsin.

AB 195 would certainly help alleviate the teacher shortage. It would be even more effective if it would recognize teaching experience in private K-12 schools in Wisconsin.

Currently, the bill requires DPI to issue a reciprocity-based license to a teacher with a license from another state if the teacher taught in Wisconsin under a license or permit issued by DPI for at least two semesters and the school district or charter school where they taught under that license confirms the teaching experience was successful.

We urge you to amend the bill to include private school teachers in this provision. This would require multi-point changes in the bill. First, the bill should allow DPI to issue a reciprocity-based license to a private school teacher with a license from another state. Second, the bill should allow DPI to issue a permit or license to private school teachers for at least two semesters. And, finally, the bill should allow private schools where those teachers taught under those licenses to confirm to DPI that their teacher's teaching experience was successful.

The change to include private school teachers will treat them equitably, and will also strengthen the overall teacher pipeline in Wisconsin.

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