

Testimony House Bill 1238
Senate Workforce Development Committee
March 6, 2025
Education Standards and Practices Board

Good morning, Chairman Wobbema and members of the committee. My name is Rebecca Pitkin, and I am the executive director of the North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). I represent our Board in opposition to HB1238, which proposes lifetime licenses for teachers who have been teaching for 20 years, instead of the 30 years currently in administrative rules. Although seemingly arbitrary, the 30-year license originates from the time frame when educators had to meet the rule of 80 to retire, and this generally occurred around the 30 years of teaching mark. Changing a 30-year license to a 20-year license eliminates ten years or more of an educator's career when they would be required to complete reeducation credits for license. Following testimony before the House Education Committee, the Board agreed they would be satisfied with an individual receiving a life license at 25 years, thus removing some of the factors mentioned in testimony, one specifically related to cost. Representative Ista noted in his testimony before the House Education Committee that requirements for attorneys were not removed but were reduced and perhaps this is a direction to pursue. In addition, the office staff is committed to investigating low cost and no cost continuing education options-recognizing that as an occupational board which licenses educators, continuing education is a must. Meaningful professional development done in a district should count for reeducation for license renewal as ESPB allows educators to determine the professional development they need. The Board appreciates the efforts made by Representative Ista since last session to address the reporting concerns as the safety of our students is a Board priority.

The Board has continued to meet regarding this topic since last session. A summary of the Board's views on this topic was discussed in July 2024, and the Board most recently concluded a life license at 25 years may be a compromise. The Board holds the following beliefs:

1. ESPB needs to continue to require self-reporting on renewals, particularly considering a recent increase in special meetings to address boundary violations. This has been addressed in the bill.

2. Lowering the requirements of ongoing education for teachers does not promote the profession and all occupational boards require continuing education in some form. To my knowledge, and evidenced by occupational board testimony this session, there is no other occupational board that gives a 30-year license, and the Boards require continuing education the lifetime of the license.
3. Given the recent reading requirements, and now HB 2213—relating to the science of math—as well as increased changes in education, educators need to continue to engage in professional development, as do all occupational board licensees.
4. Beneficial, content specific professional development credits are readily available in all formats. North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) provides numerous professional development opportunities to assist and support schools as well as the NDHub and NDUnited.
5. Educators should use their district mandated professional development for license renewal.

In the past 10 years, education has seen dramatic changes in areas such as technology integrations, remote learning, the impact of social media on students, trauma and mental health of students, and changing ways of assessment to name a few. In addition, the public perception of teaching has been impacted negatively.

A recent survey of state teacher licensing boards indicates 83% require professional development courses to renew a license or certificate until the end of a teacher's career. Teachers are the model of life-long learning that we constantly advocate for our students. Teachers do need to be rewarded for their work and commitment to our students. Perhaps a compromise can be reached which would benefit both the Board's commitment to ongoing professional development and would require the ESPB staff to explore low cost and no cost professional development options, as this work has already begun.

This concludes my testimony. I stand for any questions.

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