Survival Coalition
of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

P.O. Box 7222, Madison, Wisconsin 53707

June 2, 2015

To: Senator Alberta Darling, Co-Chair Joint Committee on Finance
Representative John Nygren, Co-chair Joint Finance Committee
Members, Joint Finance Committee

Re: Teacher Licensure

We write to request that the Committee pay special attention to the impact on students with disabilities of changes to teacher licensure as passed in Motion #457.

The motion would "require DPI to issue a teaching permit to an individual in any subject area excluding English, social studies, mathematics, or science if the school board, operator, or governing body of the school district, independent '2r' charter school, or private choice school in which the individual intends to teach determines that the individual is proficient in each subject that he or she intends to teach and that the individual has relevant experience in each subject that her or she intends to teach." No bachelor's degree, or even high school diploma, is mentioned as a requirement. We further interpret this language to include special education as a subject area.

Given that DPI is also prohibited from imposing additional license or permit requirements, we are concerned that students with disabilities may not have access to highly qualified teachers.

As you know, there are eleven disability areas through which a student may be found eligible for special education programming. All of these areas require additional expertise and educational support.

The committee should consider several concerns that could impact funding:

- Whether the new licensure requirements would keep Wisconsin in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Whether new licensure requirements would keep Wisconsin in compliance with Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) highly qualified teacher requirements.

Public schools, independent charters, and private voucher schools should all have a higher bar of expectation for the qualification of those who teach students with disabilities. Special education is too crucial, and too specialized, to be credentialed for anyone with less than a bachelor's degree at the bare minimum. We support the continuation of current licensing requirements for special educators as is DPI policy.

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