

Mr. Carl Bryan
 Department of Public Instruction
 125 Webster Street
 PO Box 7841
 Madison, WI 53707-7841

Mr. Mr. Bryan:

Thank you for allowing Disability Rights Wisconsin to provide written comments relating to PI 34- Licensing Rules. Disability Rights Wisconsin is Wisconsin’s Protection and Advocacy agency for people with disabilities. A major focus of our work both individually and systemically across the state focuses on special education and the rights of students with disabilities. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments around the new rule and the challenges the rule raises for students with disabilities in our public schools.

Disability Rights Wisconsin understands that our state is facing an extreme shortage in the number of qualified teachers and we have seen an expansion the use of emergency licensing over many years. In our advocacy work we often encounter teachers including special education teachers who are educating children with disabilities under emergency licensure. This includes teachers who are teaching in the most restrictive classrooms with students who have the most significant needs medically, behaviorally, and intellectually. Sadly, we encounter teachers who are unprepared to deliver academic and positive behavioral instruction to students in the regular and special education classrooms. In some referrals to DRW, students are being injured or traumatized due to a teacher’s lack of knowledge of how to work with children with extreme behavioral challenges. As an agency, DRW has concerns about lowering the bar to receive and keep an emergency license for an extended period of time.

There are several areas of concern associated with the new rule:

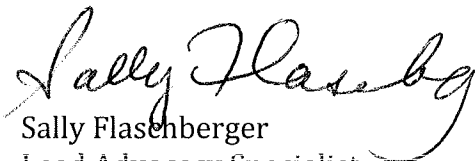
- Teachers under an emergency license would no longer be required to show progress in an approved licensure program at an IHE or an alternative route if they can show they have attempted to take the required tests required for licensure;
- Teachers would have to attempt but not pass the tests required for licensure to be allowed to continue with an emergency license;
- Districts would be provided leeway to waive all the requirements and develop a plan that would need to be approved by DPI to maintain an emergency license.

While we understand school districts' lack of new qualified teachers, DRW feels strongly that this new rule will lead to more unqualified people working with children with the most significant needs in, often in separate environments where there is little supervision of the person's daily interaction with these students. We would request the following options for special education teachers seeking an emergency license:

- Exclude emergency licensing for special education teachers in the new rule and maintain the current requirements for these professionals seeking emergency licensing;
- Require a greater level of review and supervision of teachers operating under a special education emergency license or assigned to teach in a special education capacity;
- Develop guidance around the ratio of students with disabilities in a school and district that can be taught by emergency-licensed personnel;
- Require notice to parents through the IEP process when their child with a disability is being taught by emergency-licensed personnel;
- Require professionals seeking an emergency license to complete and pass all tests for licensure.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on PI-34. We would be happy to discuss these concerns with the Department.

Sincerely,



Sally Flaschenberger
Lead Advocacy Specialist
414-773-4646 Ext. 22
sallyf@drwi.org