

MINUTES – Special Meeting

Monday, January 27, 2025

Teams Meeting

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) meeting was called to order at 4:00pm by Board Chair Cory Steiner. Present by video conference were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, Cory Steiner, and Superintendent Kirsten Baesler. Amber Fridley and Angela Nagel were absent.

Also present were ESPB Executive Director Rebecca Pitkin, Assistant Director Mari Riehl, and Amy Bigelow from ESPB and Mark Openshaw from Office of Attorney General.

HB 1238 – House Bill 1238 would amend NDCC 15.1-13-12.1 to allow for a life teaching license to be issued after an individual has held a North Dakota teaching license for 20 years or more. Currently the requirement is 30 or more years. Becky testified to the House Education Committee on January 21 the board's wishes and recommendations from July 2024. At that time the board wished to keep the 30-year life license requirements as-is. The board believes teachers should be lifelong learners with the continuing requirement for re-education.

The bill as proposed would change the life license to 20 years with a requirement to self-report any background offenses to the board at least once every five years.

Mari shared information about the Educational Hub. She found that because it's relatively new, there are not an overabundance of course options for educators. She isn't sure if it's substantial enough to be the only provider of re-education at this point for educators. She also found that courses with more substance did carry a fee and doesn't know if there would be a large savings if educators only use the Hub.

Becky also informed the board that changing to a 20-year life license would cause approximately a \$100,000 agency loss per biennium. She did not include this in her testimony but wanted to inform the board. Voting on the bill passed the House 79 to 12, with 3 absent and not voting

Cory Steiner also testified in opposition to the bill. Becky and Cory were the only two in opposition. Cory attempted to make it clear that most credits are available for \$55 each and he doesn't feel the financial impact on teachers is overwhelming. Representative Ista pointed out the number of re-education credits for him as a lawyer have been reduced, but Cory reminded the committee that re-education requirements for attorneys have not been eliminated, as this bill is attempting to do for teachers after 20 years.

Becky has provided the board with potential options.

Evan Kritzberger said as he's progressing in his teaching career, paying for credits isn't an issue. He stated he doesn't feel the shortage is due to teachers not wanting to complete credits or renew their license. The problem needs to be correctly identified, and that's that the profession is undervalued. Patti Stedman agrees with Evan, and she's trying to figure out the problem the 20-year life license is trying to solve. She said re-education and the number of years of licensure required to obtain a life license never came up in the Recruitment and Retention Task Force. Some board members feel this

change will not have an impact on recruitment and retention.

Dustin Hager asked for background information and if a life license allows someone to continue to teach. He used his job in the medical profession as an example – they always have to get credits regardless of how long they've been in the profession. There is an emeritus license for physicians that exempts them from continuing education and renewal fees, however individuals holding an emeritus physician's license are not allowed to practice medicine.

Superintendent Baesler reminded board members that teachers can use PD they've completed in their districts for license renewal. There is the opportunity to turn clock hours completed through district professional development into credits through Valley City State University. (They can do this through Mayville State also.) Would ESPB have the option of changing the requirement to be clock hours instead of transcribed credits? She hears from NDUnited that being issued a life license is a sign of respect or honor, but she feels teachers are honored and there is an opportunity for individuals to keep learning. Superintendent Baesler feels this bill is getting traction and doesn't know it will be able to be killed. She wonders if an amendment can be proposed to collaborate with the Educational Hub that teachers can secure no or low-cost opportunities for continuing education.

Siri Coleman asked if the board is at the point where they want to discuss option of less credits? Cory doesn't know if less credits would change much regarding this bill. Evan asked if the board wants to explore the option of the office documenting re-education/clock hours?

Sarah Lerud said she doesn't have problems paying for credits. To her, it's not the credits that are the issue and she questioned the number of years. She asked if the compromise could be changing from 30 to 25 years, with no other changes at this time, with a study on re-education requirements. Cory said this would then give ESPB time to investigate options for credits/continuing education hours/Educational Hub.

Becky asked Superintendent Baesler if this would change things for counselors, librarians, and administrators who are still required to complete credits to maintain those respective credentials. Superintendent Baesler said since the bill does not identify credentials, individuals would still need to meet specialty requirements as outlined in DPI rules. Evan also asked if the life license drops to 25 years, what effect that has on conversations on self-reporting. He worries that people still commit crimes as they get older. How does that effect ability to regulate licensees? That will need to be determined.

Cory said Representative Ista was heavily in favor of life license holders needing to continue to self-report.

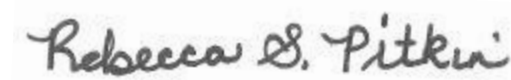
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Evan Kritzberger made a motion to propose an amendment to HB 1238 for a 25-year life license instead of a 30-year life license and for ESPB to collaborate with entities to investigate a low/no-cost continuing education option moving forward. Motion seconded by Sheila Schlafmann. Board members who voted yes were Jenny Bladow, Siri Coleman, Dustin Hager, Evan Kritzberger, Sarah Lerud, Sheila Schlafmann, Patti Stedman, and Cory Steiner. None opposed. Motion carried

The meeting was adjourned at 4:49pm.


Chair


Secretary/Executive Director