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PROFESSIONAL
TEACHING STANDARDS
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Good morning, Chairman Flores, and members of the committee. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share information with you about National Board Certification, a process that enhanced my teaching, improved my students' learning, and is keeping me and the vast majority of my National Board Certified Teacher colleagues in the classrooms of our state's public schools.

My name is Peggy Brookins, and I am the Director and Mathematics Instructor of the Engineering and Manufacturing Institute of Technology at Forest High School in Ocala. I am a teacher, I am passionate about it, and I am committed to making myself and my profession the best we can be so that my students and all the students in Florida will learn and will achieve at the highest possible levels. It's because of that commitment that I sought National Board Certification. It's because of you that I was able to do that. I want to thank you for giving me that opportunity to improve my practice through National Board Certification.

Today I'm going to talk to you about the three big effects of National Board Certification that I've witnessed myself in my school and in this state. Following my presentation, Dr. Linda Cavalluzzo will share the research that reiterates those three effects. It's important to us to do that because we know that Florida has invested a lot in the Dale Hickam Act and that, in tough times, you have to make hard choices about which

programs are most effective. We're here because we know this program is effective in improving our schools.

First a little background. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was founded in 1987 at the behest of the Carnegie Foundation and with the support of Republican and Democratic policy makers and business leaders. It also had then and now the support of both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. You can see that from the beginning this organization was unlike any other. This was a place where two rival unions sat side by side, where unionists sat down with business leaders, where Republicans and Democrats shared a focus and a plan. The National Board's mission, established by this unlikely crowd of organizers, is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do,
- Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and
- Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

Since I've mentioned unions, I want to clear up a misconception about unions and the National Board. The organization is, contrary to rumor, not a union-dominated organization nor does money from the National Board go toward supporting the unions. I believe FEA would substantiate that; as much as it might wish for money from the National Board, none is forthcoming!

Since 1987, the program has grown to the point that there are NBCTs in every state and a total of nearly 74,000 in the country. Florida began to support the program in the late 1990s, and, as a result of your support, our state now ranks second in the nation in the total number of NBCTs certified here. Among school districts in the nation, Broward County ranks first with Dade also in the top five districts. Several other Florida

districts rank among the top ten in the nation. In fact, every county represented by those of you on this committee has an exceptional program—Dade, Broward, Orange, Polk, Pasco, Marion and Nassau.

National Board Certification is a sound investment that helps retain outstanding teachers in the classroom and creates mentors for the school. The program is also cost-effective. Excellent teachers who are National Board Certified are more likely to stay in the classroom. That is certainly true in Florida where almost 90 percent of NBCTs are still in teaching compared to 60 percent of non-NBCTs who are retained on average. More than 90 percent of National Board Certified Teachers say the process is the best professional development they have ever had. And the same percentage reported that the process itself improved their teaching practice.

Description of the National Board Certification Process

How does the National Board Certification process work? It's voluntary; it's rigorous; and it's available to teachers who have completed at least three full years of teaching. About 40 percent of candidates achieve certification the first year; about 65 percent do so by the end of the three-year cycle.

The National Board assessment consists of two main parts: portfolio entries and assessment center exercises. Specific entries and exercises vary among 25 certificate areas but all require a three-hour test measuring content knowledge. As one teacher in Miami said, "NBCTs know their content in their bones." They also all require video presentations, student products, teaching artifacts, and candidates' analyses of their teaching practice. The two pieces together assure that any teacher earning the distinction of NBCT knows her subject matter and can teach it effectively to students.

I'd like to refer you to one of the retired prompts for the Adolescent/Young Adulthood Mathematics certificate. This is designed

for teachers working with students ages 14-18. This prompt measures data analysis, and this one was actually one that was part of my assessment in 2004. Candidates at the assessment center when faced with this prompt must read, comprehend, and act. In this case, they must produce a graph in response to part one and then must repeat that process with part two.

My point in showing you this is to have you understand that National Board Certified Teachers have deep and broad content knowledge. In my field of mathematics, NBCTs have a profound mathematical understanding. The same profound understanding of a discipline would be required for each of the other 24 certificates.

Students of National Board Certified Teachers Benefit

I think everyone agrees that the intent behind the National Board Certification process is sound—but does it work? The answer is yes. In the two decades since the National Board was founded, National Board Certification has become one of the most heavily researched areas in the teaching field. We don't have the time to go through all of the studies, and I'll leave the task of highlighting and summarizing to Dr. Linda Cavalluzzo, a researcher who will speak in a few minutes. What I'd like to do is to tell you about the difference it made to one my students in Ocala.

Kevin was a shy, reserved student who had not, in most of his classes in most of his years in school, stood out. Two weeks ago, Kevin, a senior, visited USF. As always, after one of my students has visited colleges, I talked with him about his experience. Kevin proudly recounted that, while visiting labs where a study of alternative fuels was occurring, he made suggestions for other experiments the college juniors and seniors might undertake. When asked how he knew those things, he said that he'd learned them in my class two years ago through the integrated problem-solving activities required in my classes. It's true. Kevin had

learned those things in my class and more. I'm proud of that, but I need you to know that this would not have been the case six years ago before I went through the National Board Certification process. That process changed my teaching. In fact, I tell my colleagues that I'd like to recall all my pre-National Board students and apologize!

National Board Certification offers teachers the elements of professionalism I believe keep us in teaching: complexity that challenges and connection between effort and results.

Benefits for Teachers

That's what National Board Certification has done for my students. Let me tell you what it's done for me and my colleagues. A study by L. Bond of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro shows that National Board Certified Teachers consistently outperform their peers in knowledge of subject matter, ability to adapt instruction, and ability to create challenging and engaging lessons. I've found that to be true for me and the other NBCTs I know because the process forced us to become deeply rooted in our content areas in a way we hadn't before. It also forced us to look at what we were doing in our classrooms and to assess the value of activities and lesson plans in a manner that no other assessment requires. And it required us to collaborate with each other and to reach out to parents.

National Board Certified Teachers fulfill the US Department of Education's definition of "highly qualified," as outlined in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—and they are assets to their students, colleagues, and communities. At a time when more pressures are being placed on teachers to improve student achievement, National Board Certification ensures that our teachers deliver the best instruction in the classrooms, positively affect student academic achievement, and play key roles in turning around low-performing schools.

Benefits for Schools and Districts

National Board Certified Teachers regularly lead efforts to create closer ties among schools and students, families and communities. They play a crucial role in mentoring new teachers and helping struggling ones to improve—and they frequently serve as faculty voices to policymakers and other stakeholders.

Here in Florida we have seen the benefits first-hand. In Dade County, the district's research showed that retention of new teachers mentored by NBCTs far outstripped retention of those who didn't have that mentoring. In Florida, we've seen our student achievement improving. *Education Week*, the nation's education newspaper, gave the state a B- in student achievement, up from a C+ last year. In most of our school districts, we've seen that it is NBCTs who lead professional development in the school districts, who mentor new and struggling teachers in their schools, and who lead professional learning communities. Finally, we've seen that it's NBCTs who stay in teaching.

One more thought: National Board Certification is the only pay-for-performance plan that has the support of teachers, administrators, unions, and school boards. It's the only pay-for-performance plan—of the many that have been tried in Florida—that has lasted.

Closing

These are tough times economically so you need to fund those programs that can make a difference. National Board Certification does. In tough times, you need to find sources of funding that will allow you to balance your budget. Federal stimulus funds can be used to pay for National Board Certification. South Carolina and Virginia are already using those funds to keep their programs going because they've seen the benefits.

National Board Certification is one of the most powerful tools to improve the quality of teachers in Florida. While I believe that National

Board Certified Teachers cannot single-handedly transform schools, they can serve as a catalyst for effective change. I've seen it in schools across this state, and I know it's true for the students and teachers at Forest High School in Ocala. For all these reasons---effective teaching, improved learning, teacher retention---I urge you to support the National Board Certification program in Florida so that every teacher has the opportunity to improve through this process. Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to answer any questions.