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Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the National Board Certification program.

North Carolina passed legislation to support this program in 1994, the first state in the nation to have a comprehensive program of support to help teachers become National Board Certified and to pay them for their performance if they succeeded. As a result, NC has been first in the nation in the number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) since that time. We now have over 14,000 NBCTs.

But being first is not the point of the program. As you know, virtually all research studies declare that the most important element in improving student achievement is the teacher. Accomplished teachers can change students and schools. The National Research Council, an arm of the National Academies of Science, was directed by Congress to examine the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. At the end of nearly two years of study, the NRC declared that students of NBCTs achieve more and that NBCTs are more likely to stay in teaching. The last time DPI collected data on teacher retention among NC NBCTs, it found that 93% were still in education, and 91% were still in the classroom. Furthermore, 36% of NBCTs in NC teach in Title I schools.

There is a lot of data on the positive effect of NBCTs on students, on their colleagues, and on schools. NC has benefited from 14,000 NBCTs because teachers have had access to the process. Our state has always believed that the National Board's rigorous yearlong process would improve teaching skills. That's why National Board Certification is one of the goals of the Collaborative Project and why many principals encourage teachers to pursue Certification.

The cost of the assessment is \$2500, much beyond the reach of most teachers, so the state has paid it as an investment in professional growth. The state has given every teacher in every corner of the state the opportunity to pursue National Board Certification. In exchange for our paying the fee, the teacher must complete the full process and must continue to teach here the following year. Without help with the fee payment, the vast majority of teachers in NC will no longer have access to the one program that allows them to make more money while staying in the classroom with students.

There is also one further complication in making this decision. The application window opened March 1. Since that time, the state has already paid for 219 teachers to become candidates. Another 223 have applied and begun the process in the belief that their fee will be paid after July 1.

I know that, unless revenue is raised, we all have to take cuts. I ask you to consider how to make these cuts in a way that will not deny NC teachers access to National Board Certification and in a manner that will continue to make National Board Certified Teachers available to all our students. Every child deserves our best.

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