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Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 1252

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Good morning, Chairman Piccola, honorable members of the Senate Education Committee, staff, and guests. I am Walter Jordan-Davis, Regional Director for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). My professional life has been spent in a variety of positions that afforded me the opportunity to help advance quality teaching and learning for all children. It is with this frame of reference that I address you today to speak in favor of Senate Bill 1252, PN 1709, which Senator Dinniman introduced as a companion to Representative Roebuck's legislation in the House.

I will provide the Committee with a brief overview of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and describe research and other evidence showing that National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) enhance learning and achievement. I will also discuss the underlying provisions of the legislation and the role of National Board Certification in Pennsylvania.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION PROCESS

So what exactly is National Board Certification? It is a voluntary certification effort that has a rigorous theoretical base, proven assessment technology, and effective processes to guide teaching practice.

The National Board assessment consists of two main parts: portfolio entries and assessment center exercises. Specific entries and exercises vary among 25 certificate areas. The portfolios consist of video presentations, student products, teaching artifacts, and candidate analyses of their teaching practice. Assessments reflect specific knowledge of content areas and are meant to validate the content of the portfolios.

THE VALUE OF THE NATIONAL BOARD PROGRAM TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

We all want to create better schools and improve student learning, and we know that the key is better teaching. National Board Certification is the highest recognition of excellence in professional educational practice in the United States. Yet, National Board Certification is not simply about rewarding high quality teaching. As in other professions such as medicine and law, National Board Certification assures the public that the people who educate their children are experts in their fields and have the skills to help all students learn.

STUDENTS OF NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS BENEFIT

The National Board Certification process is sound—but does it work? The answer is an unqualified yes. In the 20 years since the National Board was founded, National Board Certification has become one of the most heavily researched areas in the teaching field.

Several independent studies indicate that students of NBCTs do better on standardized tests than students of non-National Board Certified Teachers. One study conducted by labor economist Dan Goldhaber and Emily Anthony of the University of Washington and the Urban Institute provided “direct evidence that the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is identifying and certifying teachers who will raise student achievement” and the results “could put to rest some of the controversy in education circles surrounding the national certification.” Specifically, what the research clearly shows is there is a difference between NBCTs and non-NBCTs. NBCTs are:

- More effective at raising student achievement in math and reading than teachers who pursue, but fail to obtain, NBPTS certification
- More effective at raising student achievement – outside of the year in which they apply – than teachers who do not pursue NBPTS certification
- Have a greater impact with younger students

A study by L. Vandervoort of Arizona State University demonstrated that students of National Board Certified Teachers also showed learning gains equivalent to spending an extra month in school.

Other studies, demonstrate that students of NBCTs exhibit great comprehension of classroom instruction and better writing abilities and are able to apply knowledge more successfully than students of non-NBCTs. We have evidence that NBCTs create more challenging curricula, present subject matter in greater depth and provide better feedback to students than students of non-NBCTs. They are also better able to adapt their teaching strategies to reach diverse student learning styles within their classrooms.

BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

Research also shows that teachers benefit from the National Board Certification process. 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. As Andrea Peterson, National Board Certified Teacher and the 2007 National Teacher of the Year puts it, “The National Board process revolutionizes a teacher’s instructional methods to make the teacher a more vital, effective and committed educator. It is due to this belief that I will continue in the role of mentor and recruiter for NBC.”

National Board Certified Teachers effectively fulfill the US Department of Education’s definition of “highly qualified,” described 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 and positively affect student academic achievement. While any student would benefit from having a NBCT, these highly skilled teachers have what is needed to play key roles in turning around low-performing schools.

BENEFITS FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

National Board Certified Teachers play a crucial role in mentoring new teachers and helping struggling ones to improve—and they frequently serve as educators’ voices to policymakers and other stakeholders.

Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association, recognizes the important roles of National Board Certified Teachers as change agents. She said: “What we have found is that teachers who go through the National Board Certification process become the school district’s best change agents to raise the level of classroom instruction, which results in greater student achievement.”

Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Counsel of Chief State School Officers is also a strong supporter of NBC. He said that, “National Board Certification is one of the most significant education reforms in recent years. Those who attain National Board Certification are strengthening the teaching profession across the country.”

NATIONAL BOARD - A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) work with school and central office administrators to build a *“culture of school success”* where all teachers work together to positively impact learning in their schools. NBCTs, as experienced mentors, work very closely with teachers new to the profession and provide intensive, personal interactions designed to help each candidate with their specific need. Many school systems now support NBC as a recognized model of staff development, with intense training buttressed by rigorous support provided by NBCTs and other instructional advocates.

NATIONAL BOARD AND THE PENNSYLVANIA’S TEACHER QUALITY INITIATIVE

Nearly four years ago, Governor Rendell announced the Pennsylvania Teaching Quality Initiative, committing \$1.2 million as part of his “Pennsylvania Competes” initiative. The early successes of his efforts are impressive. Four individual grants of \$75,000 helped establish Centers for Teaching Excellence on the campuses of Gannon, Duquesne, and East Stroudsburg, and Temple Universities. These Centers are geographically targeted to cover each region of the state. They are charged to work closely with local school districts to recruit candidates and provide locations for mentoring, group work and research activities. This initiative has resulted in a growth rate of 107% in the number of NBCTs in Pennsylvania from 2007 to 2009.

Pennsylvania needs to build on this success through the implementation of supportive legislation. Senate Bill 1252 under review today will help institutionalize National Board Certification in Pennsylvania. If you look at the states where National Board Certification has its strongest presence, those states have built-in legislative incentives to support the program. This is done through a combination of fee supports and salary supplements. Why is this so important? When you look at these states, a couple of factors emerge. First, National Board Certification (NBC) must be embedded in the state's infrastructure. Teachers need the assurance that the program is permanent and stable. The law must incorporate financial support for both the assessment fee and for a salary incentive. If Pennsylvania is to embrace fully NBC, these factors must be present.

PROVISIONS OF SENATE BILL 1252

Senate Bill 1252 will build on the current vision of Pennsylvania National Board program by providing the legislative framework to grow and sustain the existing National Board process in Pennsylvania. Teachers with at least three years of experience will be afforded the opportunity to work through National Board's in-depth performance assessment process. Participation in Pennsylvania's National Board program will give teachers the time and the opportunity to analyze in a systematic way their professional development as teachers, successful teaching strategies, and the substantive areas in which they teach. The effort will prepare teachers to regularly lead efforts to create closer ties among schools and students, families and communities.

Now is the time to act. The statewide effort to provide a quality education for every child in Pennsylvania has jump-started a quality revolution. NBCTs can serve as strong components of this change effort. They can also provide direct interventions for teachers who are struggling.

PENNSYLVANIA'S PROGRESS

I believe that teaching quality in Pennsylvania classrooms made a substantial gain in 2009 with 140 state teachers achieving National Board Certification. The Centers - through their leadership, recruitment, training, and support - have played an important role in making this happen.

There are now 639 National Board Certified Teachers in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania ranks 15th nationwide – up from 25th two year ago – in the number of National Board Certified Teachers, and, based on the number of current projections, Pennsylvania is expected to rise significantly in future rankings. Pennsylvania's 140 National Board Certified Teachers joined the ranks of the 8,900 teachers nationwide who achieved certification in 2009. Pennsylvania is in the vanguard of a true movement. The cumulative total of NBCTs stands at more than 82,000.

Other factors demonstrate the success of the National Board in Pennsylvania. For example, more than half of the state's NBCTs teach in Title I schools¹. The state's top

¹ This percentage is based on teachers whose schools could be identified as Title I using NCES criteria.

five school districts in terms of the cumulative total of NBCTs are Pittsburgh (104), Philadelphia City (52), Central Bucks (46), Quaker Valley (25), and Manheim (19).

FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

On June 11, 2008, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies completed an extensive, multi-year study of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and National Board Certification. In the most rigorous and comprehensive study to date of National Board Certification, the highly respected NRC formally affirmed the National Board's positive impact on student achievement, teacher retention, and professional development. The findings from the NRC study:

1. Showed that students taught by NBCTs make higher gains on achievement tests than those taught by teachers who have not applied and those who did not achieve certification
2. Substantiated previous research showing that National Board Certification has a positive impact on teacher retention and that NBCTs are more likely to stay in teaching longer than other teachers
3. Observed that the National Board Certification process is an effective professional development experience that positively affects teaching practices
4. Acknowledged that NBPTS Standards and National Board Certification have taken the culture of teaching to a higher level

CLOSING

I come to you today to urge you to move quickly to enact Senate Bill 1252 to institutionalize NBC in the Commonwealth that is at the core of the Pennsylvania Teaching Quality Initiative. I realize that these are tough times economically so you need to fund those programs that can make a difference. National Board Certification does.

Pennsylvania has much to applaud and for which to be proud. Nevertheless Pennsylvania must take legislative action to sustain and build upon our successes. Support for Senate Bill 1252 will signify strong sponsorship for the NBC efforts and consequently school improvement efforts in the Commonwealth. It will demonstrate the commitment and support to enable teachers—our strongest asset in promoting student learning and school improvement—to deliver the high-quality instruction that all students need and deserve.

NBC is one of the most powerful tools to grow and sustain educational excellence in Pennsylvania. NBCTs can serve as a means for effective change. For all these reasons—effective teaching, improved learning, teacher retention—I recommend that you support the National Board Certification program in Pennsylvania by voting in favor of Senate Bill 1252 so that every teacher has the opportunity to improve through this voluntary process; thereby, improving Pennsylvania's future. Thank you for your time.