

**Testimony of Melanie Olmstead  
American Board**

**Proponent House Bill 628**

Chairman Brenner and Members of the Committee, my name is Melanie Olmstead and I am Director of Government Affairs for American Board, a nonprofit alternative teacher certification program and the sponsor of House Bill 628. This legislation will expand the resident teacher license to allow candidates who possess at least a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited university to enter a rigorous, but affordable, program. Those candidates who pass a subject matter examination and pass a pedagogy examination will obtain a resident educator license in the State of Ohio. Under this legislation, programs wishing to operate within the State must be a nonprofit organization operating within a minimum of five (5) other states and must be administering an alternative teacher credential program for a minimum of 10 years. This criteria is included to ensure that only programs with a proven record of success enter the state under this legislation.

We are a nonprofit organization that provides career changers with an affordable route to become teachers. American Board's online program is self-paced and includes robust online tutorials but requires no additional college coursework or student teaching. The average American Board candidate earns their teaching certificate within 10 months of enrolling. American Board was founded in 2001 by the U.S. Department of Education and is currently operating in 13 states across the Country. American Board helps communities grow their own teacher supply. Rather than recruit recent college graduates who will inevitably may leap frog to another city, American Board helps local community members who already hold a bachelor's degree get trained, get licensed, and get a job teaching in their local school.

Teacher demand is on the rise and is outpacing teacher supply. A combination of demographic and population shifts, and economic and fiscal challenges have made it increasingly difficult for Ohio public schools to attract and retain teachers. As such, the Ohio Department of Education reports that districts across the state are seeing persistent teacher shortages, particularly in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). According to the Columbus Dispatch, from the 2003/2004 to the 2014/2015 school year issuances of bachelor's degrees in Education fell from 6,759 to 4,983. Over that same period, increases in college tuition has left the average Education major with \$30,000 in student debt. That debt is roughly equivalent to the average starting salaries for Ohio teachers in some school districts. In contrast, as a non-profit, American Board offers its teacher credential program for \$1,900. Since inception, American Board has certified over 6,000 teachers in 13 states.

The need to attract and retain teachers in Ohio's rural communities is even greater than in our more populated and higher-paying school districts. American Board's candidates for teacher licensing are already in your communities. Our program allows for these communities to cultivate their own teachers from existing residents that already have a bachelor's degree and can pass the program.

HB 628 allows for an increase in teacher supply throughout Ohio. Our program, and those like our program, provide a rigorous alternative teacher licensing program that helps meet rising demands and lower pupil-to-teacher ratio.

HB 628 maintains quality in teacher credentialing by requiring that providers in Ohio currently operate within at least five (5) other states and be in business for a minimum of 10-years. This helps to eliminate the potential entrance of "credential mills" in Ohio that operate only on for profit only and focus on the business rather than on the quality of teachers provided.

HB 628 will provide quality teachers. Research conducted by a third-party on the American Board program, through Drexel University, concluded that teachers certified through the American Board certification program performed equivalently to traditional college prepared teachers across 75% of the evaluated aspects of teacher quality, including subject-area knowledge, ability to communicate with parents, conflict resolution, and classroom management. In 20% of the aspects reviewed including bringing real-world experiences into the classroom, community connection and job appreciation, American Board Teachers were rated *higher* than traditional college prepared teachers. The surveyed principals indicated that have American Board teachers as employees rated 95% of these teachers as "effective" and 97% of these principles would offer them further contract extensions.

HB 628 will reduce the need for non-credential teachers in Ohio's classrooms. By increasing the supply of qualified teachers in Ohio, this legislation will reduce the need for utilization of non-credentialed teachers within the State.

Members of the Committee, I would like to thank you for your consideration and I urge your support for HB 628.

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