

NJTESOL/NJBE, Inc.

AN AFFILIATE OF NJEA, TESOL, NABE

New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/New Jersey Bilingual Educators, Incorporated

A professional organization for those concerned with the teaching of English as a Second Language,
Bilingual Education and Standard English as a Dialect

July 20, 2020

Thank you to the judiciary committee for allowing me to speak to you today. On behalf of NJTESOL/NJBE, a professional organization of educators and administrators dedicated to the instruction of English learners (ELs) at all levels of public and private education, I am speaking to you all today to advocate for the passage of The Professional and Occupational License Bill (A4225). We ask that New Jersey removes barriers to occupational licenses so all qualified individuals regardless of federal immigration status can obtain an occupational license, pursue their profession and contribute to New Jersey.

Thousands of immigrant young people across New Jersey are studying to become teachers. These future educators are graduates of our ESL and Bilingual programs. They offer a unique perspective as teachers to other immigrant students, but without the ability to achieve their New Jersey teaching certificates these valuable resources are lost to other states that do allow them to become teachers. Removing barriers to professional licenses can fill urgent bilingual, ESL, dual language, and world language teacher shortages.

Federal data indicates that New Jersey is producing far fewer teacher candidates than a decade ago. In fact, the number of candidates completing teacher preparation programs has dropped 49 percent between 2009 and 2018. These declines, which are part of national and regional trends, are even more significant when you look at the particular fields of bilingual, English as a Second Language, dual language and world language education. The State of the New Jersey Educator Workforce Report recently published by Jersey Can, noted that only 23% of our educator preparation providers across the state have produced Bilingual educators and 18% had less than 10 candidates per program. With the critical shortage in these areas of instruction, it is essential to enable all possible candidates the opportunity to teach in New Jersey.

NJTESOL/NJBE encourages you all to consider the benefit that passing A4225 will bring to the students and school districts of New Jersey. As future teachers, these professionals will actively support the growth of New Jersey students. It will also provide essential skilled employees to New Jersey school districts which now have to look outside the state to recruit teachers or in many cases, just do without essential staff. These young immigrants are here and eager to share their talents with the members of their communities, all of them deserve the right to follow their chosen fields which will only improve New Jersey's reputation as a leader in the field of education. Thank you for the opportunity to share this information today.

References:

<https://jerseycan.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/06/JerseyCAN-EWR-1-Final.pdf>

<https://www.njpp.org/reports/new-jerseys-shrinking-pool-of-teacher-candidates>