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State Senator
14th District

Senate Bill 494 – Montessori Licensure
January 6, 2016

Thank you members of the Senate Education committee for hearing testimony today on Senate Bill 494.

Currently, we allow an initial teaching license to be granted to a person who has successfully completed a teacher education program that is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE). In order to be eligible for this initial license you must:

1. Possess a bachelor's degree.
2. Successfully complete a teacher education program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.
3. Successfully complete an introductory course in special education for which the individual earned at least 3 postsecondary credits.
4. Have earned a passing score on any standardized examinations required by the state superintendent.

The goal for this law was to allow people who have a 4-year degree and have attended a rigorous Montessori teacher education program to be licensed to teach at a school that uses the Montessori method as its primary method of instruction. Most programs that teach Montessori Teacher Education are accredited by MACTE. However, a few programs are approved by the Association Montessori International (AMI) rather than the MACTE.

Senate Bill 494 modifies the second requirement in current law to allow for teachers who receive training approved by AMI to also be eligible for the Montessori license. Modifying this law would help correct the shortage of Montessori-trained educators that has impacted many schools, such as the Isthmus Montessori Academy here in Madison.

Thank you, members. I ask for your support and would be more than happy to answer any questions.

Date: January 6, 2016
To: Members, Senate Education Committee
From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Instruction
RE: Statement Senate Bill 494

Current Law

Under Act 55, the biennial budget, the Department of Public Instruction (the department) was required to create an alternative pathway to licensure for Montessori trained educators. The alternative path to licensure required the applicant to meet the following requirements.

1. The individual has a bachelor's degree.
2. The individual successfully completed a teacher education program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.
3. The individual successfully completed a three-credit introductory course in special education.
4. The individual received a passing score on any standardized examination the Department of Public Instruction requires to obtain an equivalent license under the traditional licensing path and the Foundations of Reading test.

Senate Bill 494

Senate Bill 494 expands the teacher education programs that satisfy a requirement for obtaining an initial teaching license under the alternative teacher licensure path described above to include teacher education programs approved by the Association Montessori Internationale in addition to programs accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education. The Association Montessori Internationale serves as the approval board for some Montessori training centers in the United States, including the Milwaukee Montessori Institute.

SB 494 makes no other changes to any of the other requirements associated with the Montessori alternative teacher licensure path. If enacted, the department will make the necessary modification to the administrative rule that was drafted following the enactment of Act 55.

Committee members, I am here today representing the Wisconsin Montessori Association who is in full support of Senate Bill 494. The current legislation has provided an excellent opportunity for Montessori trained individuals to teach Montessori education in Wisconsin. Montessori Public Policy Initiative recognizes Wisconsin as a state that supports Montessori education. Adding the Association Montessori International AMI training certification to this law will only increase the opportunity for filling the current Montessori jobs in the state but also increase the pool of talented individuals who can work in public Montessori programs.

AMI centers maintain high training standards. To become an AMI trainer of teachers the individual has to participate in a three-year teacher-training program that is approved by the AMI pedagogical committee in Amsterdam. This rigorous training program standardizes AMI training across all AMI training centers throughout the US and the world. As a result, AMI trained teachers are one of the most sought after candidates for Montessori teacher positions. In fact AMI training is the standard that many MACTE training programs aspire to become.

In my experience as a Milwaukee Public Schools principal of four Montessori programs and coordinator of hiring Montessori teachers for most of my tenure this bill will help with recruiting Montessori teachers. Every year there is a high need for these specialty teachers. During my tenure in MPS, we barely met the need for Montessori trained teachers for the Montessori programs in MPS often selecting teachers from a limited candidate pool. Out state with the creation of additional district charter and district Montessori programs this problem continues. As this legislation takes hold, we anticipate that we will have a larger teacher candidate pool to draw upon. We also expect that we will continue to recruit and bring Montessori trained individuals to Wisconsin to fill these jobs.

I want to thank you for your support of the original legislation that was passed in the Omnibus Motion and urge you to support this legislation to add AMI training to the law.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Danvers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

My name is Melissa Droessler, and I am a lifelong learner and an educator. I am a Wisconsin state licensed teacher, an AMI Montessori teacher, and an administrator. I have taught in public and private institutions, and my AMI Montessori training more than prepared me for each opportunity set before me.

When I made the choice to become a teacher it was after careful consideration and observation of different education programs. When I made the choice to enter the training to become a Montessori teacher, I was presented the option to complete the Montessori training from an Association Montessori International training center, known as AMI. Making this choice allowed for me to receive my Masters in Education and the ability to teach at any Montessori school including multiple public schools across the nation.

I know the AMI training to be rigorous, incredibly thorough, and to provide vast employment opportunities. The teacher preparation stands alone with regard to the curriculum and instruction based in human development and child psychology. Receiving the AMI training was one of the most challenging programs in which I participated, and it has also been the most rewarding.

As an administrator I interview many people each year. The candidates who have completed the AMI Montessori training are also the candidates who have gone through the most significant teacher transformation, the candidates with the most respect for the discovery of the child, and the candidates who continue to be lifelong learners.