



## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bills 614

*Assembly Committee on Education*

November 6, 2025

Chairman Kitchens, Vice-Chairman Goeben, and Members of the Committee on Education:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 614. My name is Will Flanders, and I am the Research Director at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (“WILL”). We want to thank the authors for bringing this bill forward as well, as it is critical to strengthening Wisconsin’s teacher workforce, improving classroom safety, improving student achievement, and increasing parental trust and engagement in our schools.

Wisconsin’s teacher retention crisis is well-documented. Nearly half of new teachers leave the state or the profession within six years, according to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).<sup>1</sup> And we know some of the primary reasons this is happening. A recent *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* analysis found that “personal safety” was among the top reasons cited by the 887 staff members who have left Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

These personal safety concerns are not theoretical. WILL has heard stories about teachers from across the state who have been physically assaulted, threatened, or otherwise subjected to persistently disruptive classroom behavior with little to no administrative support.

Assembly bill 614 directly addresses these challenges by restoring basic order, authority, and support for teachers while balancing local control decision-making and parental rights. In particular, this bill:

- **Clarifies teachers’ authority** to maintain discipline, remove persistently disruptive or violent students from the classroom, and receive administrative assistance;

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *New DPI report shows Wisconsin’s education workforce is in crisis*, April 11, 2024 (available at: <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2024/education-workforce-crisis-report-analysis>).

<sup>2</sup> Rory Linnane and Gabriel Sisarcia, *We analyzed why 887 staff left MPS in recent year. Here’s what they said.*, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 1, 2025 (available at: <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/education/2025/05/01/why-did-teachers-staff-leave-mps-exit-survey-analysis-reveals-trends/83013251007/>).

- **Requires re-entry and intervention plans** so that removed students returning to the classroom receive appropriate behavioral support;
- **Protects teachers from retaliation** when they act in good faith to maintain safety or discipline;
- **Requires schools to develop and adopt policies** to ensure clear, consistent responses to disruptive or violent incidents.
- **Ensure parents are notified when their student** witnesses or is involved in any disruptive incident on school grounds at a school-approved event.

Together, these reforms provide clarity and support teachers need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

This bill also protects student achievement and learning. As State Superintendent Jill Underly acknowledged, “Wisconsin’s kids are suffering from losing quality teachers.”<sup>3</sup> When teachers do not feel safe and cannot manage their classrooms, learning suffers.

And students cannot afford to lose quality teachers at this time. National data shows twelfth-grade math scores have fallen to their lowest levels since the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) began in 2005 and only 23.8% of Milwaukee Public Schools students are proficient in reading and 18.9% in math—figures that likely overstate achievement given the DPI’s lowered proficiency thresholds.<sup>4</sup> We cannot expect to reverse these trends without first ensuring classrooms are safe and productive environments for learning.

Finally, AB 614 strengthens parental rights and encourages transparency between the school and parents. Statistics have shown again and again that the most accurate predictor of a student’s achievement is not income, social status, or racial demographic, but rather, when parents become involved in their children’s education at school.<sup>5</sup> Transparency builds between families and schools facilitates parental involvement.

Assembly Bill 613 has similar transparency policies to Assembly Bill 614. We ask for your support of AB 614 because it is a comprehensive bill that creates a

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<sup>3</sup> See n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> The Nation’s Report Card, *How did students perform in 2024?* (available at: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>); Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, *School Scorecard 2024-2025* (available at: <https://will-law.org/school-scorecard/>).

<sup>5</sup> Michael M. Barger, et al., *The Relation Between Parents’ Involvement in Children’s Schooling and Children’s Adjustment: A Meta-Analysis*, American Psychological Association, 2019 (available at: <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fbul0000201>); See also Anne T. Henderson, et al., *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994 (available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED375968.pdf>).

structure for public schools to develop a policy and plan for addressing disruptive and violent students and incidents, supports teachers in managing their classrooms and ensures parental notification when incidents occur.

Assembly Bill 614 strikes the right balance: it supports teachers, helps students, and restores confidence for parents. Parents deserve to know what is happening in their children's classrooms, especially when it is disrupting learning, and to know that the law stands behind them. Students deserve a safe classroom that fosters their success and that the law stands behind them. Wisconsin's educators deserve to know that when they maintain order and safety in their classroom the law stands behind them.