



# EXCELLENCE THROUGH EXPERIENCE

## Senate Bill 1119

*Let's make teaching certification more accessible for qualified, experienced candidates.*

### Summary

This legislation will create more pathways for qualified teachers to begin working in our state with new avenues for subject matter experts to become teachers in their area of expertise.

### Why We Need It

Oklahoma is experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers. We need to seek innovative ways to incentivize and enable more qualified candidates to enter our state's teaching workforce. There are highly educated subject matter experts in Oklahoma who can demonstrate years of mastery in their field – but the path to teaching certification is not always easy for these candidates. Often, these subject matter experts are forced to seek emergency certification, even if their school district believes they are qualified and capable to do the job. We need to empower local districts to increase their talent pipeline to the classroom.

Currently, emergency certification is essentially the only option for candidates who fall into this category to begin teaching. Emergency applications used to be rare, but as career changes become more normalized, more qualified candidates are seeking to begin teaching careers. We should create pathways for these experienced professionals to get into the classroom and start helping our kids learn while we give them mentor support to be successful in the classroom.

### The Solution

This bill allows subject matter experts to seek certification to teach the subject they are experienced in – for example, a former NASA physicist could seek certification to teach high school physics. Subject matter experts must submit an application to their local school district and are required to provide proof of higher education in the subject they intend to teach. This solution brings local control to school districts and empowers them to certify their own teachers to meet their unique needs.

Providing a certification pathway for subject matter experts increases the number of working teachers in our state and ensures they are highly qualified. Additionally, these subject matter experts can bring real life examples of how school subjects are used in the workplace, helping students find their path to their dream job.

## Why This Matters

Increasing the amount of quality teachers in our state improves our children's education. It also continues to grow the teacher pipeline by making Oklahoma jobs more attractive for teachers entering the workforce. The end result is a more robust workforce of excellent teachers who will set our kids up for success.

## Bill Details

- The State Board of Education will establish the certification process for subject matter experts and approve districts to do the certifying
- The State Board of Education shall allow districts to grant an alternative placement teaching certificate to a person who makes application to the Board and meets the following criteria:
  - Holds at least a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution
  - Has successfully completed a terminal degree such as a doctorate or master
  - Has demonstrated competency and mastery in their field
- When a subject matter expert is identified by a district as a potential certification candidate, district leadership will have to vouch for them as a qualified teacher
- Applicants will later earn standard certification by means of the alternative placement program that will take less than three years to complete with a minimum of 90 hours of professional development accomplished in the classroom