

SENATE, No. 4865

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 22, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator M. TERESA RUIZ
District 29 (Essex and Hudson)

SYNOPSIS
Establishes "Teacher Certification Reform Act of 2025."

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning teacher certification and supplementing chapter
2 26 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Teacher
8 Certification Reform Act of 2025.”

9
10 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. It is necessary to revise the State’s teacher certification
12 requirements in a manner that streamlines the certification process
13 and creates more accessible pathways towards employment as a
14 teacher, thereby easing the State’s teacher shortage, particularly in
15 high-need areas such as special education, STEM, and bilingual
16 education.

17 b. Teacher certification requirements have undergone various
18 changes throughout the past 20 years, in part, as a result of evolving
19 federal requirements.

20 c. The federal “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,”
21 20 U.S.C. s.6319, established rigorous teacher certification
22 requirements, including that teachers be “highly qualified.” These
23 changes, while well intentioned, have created barriers that are
24 contributing to a growing teacher shortage.

25 d. In 2015, Congressional action culminating in the “Every
26 Student Succeeds Act,” 20 U.S.C. s.6301, provided states with more
27 flexibility in setting teacher certification standards.

28 e. New Jersey’s current certification process, which includes
29 extensive coursework and standardized testing requirements, has
30 been criticized for its complexity and financial burden, deterring
31 potential educators from entering the profession.

32 f. Moreover, the financial and logistical barriers posed by the
33 current certification process disproportionately affect candidates
34 from lower-income and underrepresented backgrounds, reducing
35 diversity in the teaching workforce.

36 g. New Jersey is facing a significant teacher shortage, with
37 many school districts reporting a continued rise in unfilled positions
38 from year-to-year.

39 h. It is essential that New Jersey meets the critical need to grow
40 the teacher workforce by reforming the teacher certification process
41 to be more accessible and equitable, while maintaining high
42 standards for teacher quality.

43
44 3. a. The State Board of Education shall authorize a Students
45 with Disabilities Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement to the
46 instructional certificate. The endorsement shall authorize the holder
47 to teach students with disabilities in all content areas and all grade

1 levels in all public schools, with the exception of students who are
2 blind or visually impaired or auditorily impaired.

3 b. The holder of a Students with Disabilities endorsement
4 issued prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
5 before the Legislature as this bill) shall, upon application to the
6 State Board of Examiners, be issued the Students with Disabilities
7 Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement established pursuant to
8 this section.

9 c. Upon the establishment of the Students with Disabilities
10 Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement, the State Board of
11 Examiners shall no longer issue a Students with Disabilities
12 endorsement.

13
14 4. a. (1) The State Board of Education shall rename the Deaf
15 or Hard of Hearing for Oral/Aural Communication endorsement to
16 the instructional certificate as the Teacher of the Auditorily
17 Impaired for Oral/Aural Communication endorsement to the
18 instructional certificate.

19 (2) The State Board of Education shall rename the Deaf or Hard
20 of Hearing for Sign Language Communication endorsement to the
21 instructional certificate as the Teacher of the Auditorily Impaired
22 for Sign Language Communication endorsement to the instructional
23 certificate.

24 b. The holder of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing for Oral/Aural
25 Communication or Deaf or Hard of Hearing for Sign Language
26 Communication endorsement issued prior to the effective date of
27 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill)
28 shall be granted the appropriate successor endorsement named in
29 subsections a. and b. of this section upon application to the State
30 Board of Examiners.

31
32 5. a. The State Board of Education shall authorize a revised
33 Elementary School endorsement to the instructional certificate. The
34 endorsement shall authorize the holder to:

35 (1) serve as a teacher in grades kindergarten through eight in all
36 public schools;

37 (2) teach language arts literacy, mathematics, science, and social
38 studies full-time in grades kindergarten through eight;

39 (3) teach world languages full-time in grades kindergarten
40 through eight;

41 (4) teach all remaining subjects for no more than one-half of the
42 daily instructional assignment; and

43 (5) teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling, for basic
44 skills purposes only, in grades nine through 12.

45 The State board shall establish appropriate requirements for the
46 endorsement that provide a teacher with the specialized knowledge
47 and skills necessary to teach students in these content areas and
48 grades.

1 b. The holder of a kindergarten through grade six Elementary
2 School endorsement received prior to the effective date of
3 P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill),
4 shall, upon application to the State Board of Examiners, be issued
5 the Elementary School endorsement established pursuant to this
6 section.

7 c. Upon the establishment of the Elementary School endorsement
8 pursuant to this section, the State Board of Examiners shall no
9 longer issue a kindergarten through grade six Elementary School
10 endorsement.

11
12 6. a. The Department of Education shall not require a teacher
13 candidate seeking an Elementary School endorsement to the
14 instructional certificate to achieve a minimum score on each
15 individual subtest of the State test for subject matter knowledge.

16 b. The department shall require a teacher candidate seeking an
17 Elementary School endorsement to the instructional certificate to
18 achieve a minimum average composite score on the State test for
19 subject matter knowledge. The minimum average composite score
20 shall be determined by the Commissioner of Education.

21
22 7. a. The State Board of Education shall authorize a Bilingual
23 and Bicultural Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement to the
24 instructional certificate. The endorsement shall authorize the holder
25 to teach bilingual and bicultural education in all content areas and
26 grade levels in all public schools.

27 b. A candidate for the endorsement shall:

28 (1) demonstrate oral and writing competence in English and the
29 target language;

30 (2) complete an approved bilingual and bicultural education
31 program; and

32 (3) meet any other requirements established by the State board.

33 b. The holder of a Bilingual/Bicultural endorsement issued
34 prior to the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
35 the Legislature as this bill) shall, upon application to the State
36 Board of Examiners, be issued the Bilingual and Bicultural
37 Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement established pursuant to
38 this section.

39 c. Upon the establishment of the Bilingual and Bicultural
40 Preschool through Grade 12 endorsement, the State Board of
41 Examiners shall no longer issue a Bilingual/Bicultural endorsement.

42
43 8. The State Board of Education shall not require a candidate
44 seeking a Middle School with Subject Matter Specialization: World
45 Languages/Other World Languages endorsement to an instructional
46 certificate to complete subject matter preparation credits if:

47 a. the candidate is a native speaker of the language covered by
48 the endorsement;

1 endorsement is not required to complete subject matter preparation
2 credits if certain listed requirements are met. The bill also directs
3 the State Board of Education to rename the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
4 for Oral/Aural Communication and the Deaf or Hard of Hearing for
5 Sign Language Communication endorsements as Teacher of the
6 Auditorily Impaired for Oral/Aural Communication and Teacher of
7 the Auditorily Impaired for Sign Language Communication
8 endorsements.

9 Finally, the bill prohibits the Department of Education from
10 requiring a teacher candidate seeking an instructional certificate
11 with an Elementary School endorsement to achieve a minimum
12 score on each individual subtest of the State test for subject matter
13 knowledge, but instead to achieve a minimum average composite
14 score of all the subtests.

15 According to the sponsor, by creating the new standalone
16 endorsements in the bill, adjusting testing requirements, and
17 renaming certain endorsements, the bill seeks to make the
18 certification process more accessible and equitable while
19 maintaining high standards for teacher quality. These changes are
20 essential for attracting and retaining a diverse and qualified teacher
21 workforce in New Jersey.