

Statement concerning Minnesota Teaching Licensure Standards

Adopted by the Board for Apologetics, February 13, 2023

Minnesota's Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) has proposed new licensing standards that are expected to be implemented in the near future. Due to concerns that many have expressed in response to the proposal, Pr. Fred Hinz, the Public Policy Advocate for the Minnesota North and Minnesota South Districts of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, has invited representatives from his church body as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, plus leaders from their respective colleges, to meet as a “PELSB Working Group.” The Director of the ELS Center for Apologetics and Worldviews (CAW) was also invited.

- I. The CAW is uniquely situated to provide guidance to the participants at the February 17, 2023 meeting of the “PELSB Working Group.”
 - A. The CAW was established by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) to “promote evidence for the truth of Christianity and critique competing worldviews.” Its director is tasked with disseminating “information on the subjects that fall within the purview of the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews” and “promot[ing] the larger mission and work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod [and] Bethany Lutheran College ... serv[ing] as an advisor and counselor to the congregations, boards, and officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod,” and organizing “conferences, etc. for ... other educational institutions ... and other appropriate venues.”¹
 - B. The CAW Director and one board member are nationally recognized experts in the field of education policy in general and the new PELSB licensing standards in particular.²

1 The CAW presently is in its fifth year of operation. Its organizational structure was formalized at the 2022 ELS Convention. The quotations above are from the guidelines adopted at that time. See *Synod Report* (2022), pp. 151–52.

2 Director Ryan MacPherson has 20 years experience as a college professor serving secondary-education licensure students plus extensive experience in legal research and writing (including appellate brief writing in First Amendment cases) and public policy (as former editor of *The Family in America: A Journal of Public Policy*). On October 29, 2022, he spoke at a Lutheran free conference on education (handout and video archive: <https://www.hausvater.org/events/434>) On January 10, 2023, he published an op-ed in *The Federalist*, which received national media attention by Glenn Beck, Fox News, *The Christian Post*, and others, including an interview on Todd Wilken's Issues, Etc. program. See <https://thefederalist.com/author/ryan-c-macpherson> and <https://issuesetc.org/?s=macpherson>.

Board member Allen Quist is author *Fed Ed* and *America's Schools*, two ground-breaking books concerning the infiltration of anti-American and anti-Christian ideologies into public school curricula. He also is co-author with Julie Quist of “Commentary: State to require teachers to demonstrate Marxist worldview to obtain license,” *Alpha News*, June 20, 2022, <https://alphanews.org/commentary-state-to-require-teachers-to-demonstrate-marxist-worldview-to-obtain-license/>.

- C. The CAW has hosted and plans to host experts for conferences addressing issues relevant to the new PELSB licensing standards.³
- D. The CAW has addressed transgenderism, racism, social justice, etc. in several Bible-based flyers.⁴
- II. The ELS Board for Apologetics and Worldviews, which oversees the work of the CAW, has adopted a resolution stating the following findings of fact and authorizing the director to represent this position when meeting with the PELSB Working Group.
- A. Several of PELSB's standards contradict the plain teachings of Holy Scripture and natural law and therefore cannot in good conscience be supported by Christian individuals or Christian institutions.
1. "The teacher fosters an environment that ensures student identities such as ... gender identity [and] sexual orientation, ... are ... affirmed, and incorporated into a learning environment where students are empowered to learn and contribute as their whole selves."⁵
 2. "The teacher ~~features, highlights, and uses~~ demonstrates an ability to feature, highlight, and use resources ... that offer diverse perspectives on ... gender, sexual identity, ... and other identities traditionally silenced or omitted from curriculum."⁶
 3. Dr. MacPherson's October 2022 presentation (cited earlier) identified seven points of contradiction between PELSB's proposal and Christian teaching: 1) the objectivity of truth; 2) the body-soul duality of human nature; 3) the unity of human nature; 4) the blessings of Fourth Commandment inequalities; 5) the grave evil of sexual unchastity; 6) the abominable sin against nature; and, 7) the source of salvation.
 4. See also the attached chart demonstrating specific points of contradiction between the Critical Race Theory/Cultural Marxist assumptions behind PELSB's new standards and Christian doctrine.⁷ This is only a sampling of examples.

3 "Curved into Ourselves: How the New Gnosticism Cancels Our Own Humanity" (Ryan MacPherson, June 2022); "The Creation Foundation vs. Critical Theory 'Identities': Viewing Human Nature from the Proper Perspective" (Jonathan Conner, June 2022); "The Transgenderism Incursion: What to Think, How to Love" (Paul Wendland, September 2020); "COVID-19 and Disembodied Humanity" (Gene Veith, September 2020). Transgenderism also is scheduled to be addressed at two forthcoming conference: March 2023 and June 2023. See <http://blc.edu/apologetics/events>.

4 "What Is the Foundation of 'I'm Transgender'?" (September 2021), "Which 12 Words Tell the Truth about Sex?" (November 2021), "What Does the Bible Say About Race and Racism?" (March 2022), "How Should Christians Understand 'Identity'?" (March 2022), "How Should Christians Address Social Injustices?" (July 2022), See <https://els.org/apologetics-resources/qalc>.

5 PELSB proposal, p. 38. See Draft 4 at <https://mn.gov/pelsb/board/rulemaking/licensing-academic-standards>.

6 PELSB proposal, p. 40; with ~~strikeout (deletion)~~ and underlining (insertion) indicating PELSB's minor modification after the administrative judge rejected the prior wording. Note that this and a few similar examples of stylistic, non-substantive revisions are all that PELSB was willing to budge after receiving strong public outcry against the proposal.

7 PELSB's assumptions are made explicit in the SONAR document available under the "Hearing & Comment Periods" tab at <https://mn.gov/pelsb/board/rulemaking/licensing-academic-standards>.

- B. PELSB's standards repeatedly require of teachers and of teacher-training institutions the "advocacy," "support," "promotion," and so forth—not merely a passive learning *about*, but an active *endorsing*. The standards are in this regard quite distinct from the longstanding requirements to teach *about* evolution or to explain *how* evolutionary theory *would* apply to a particular scenario. PELSB's operative verbs include: "affirm," "incorporate," "help students develop," "modify instruction," "use strategies and resources," "foster an environment that ensures student identities," "support," "plan how to achieve each student's learning goals by choosing [LGBTQ+ curricula]," "feature, highlight, and use resources [that promote Cultural Marxism]," "create opportunities for students to learn about power, privilege, intersectionality, and systemic oppression," "explore their own intersecting social identities," "utilize tools to mitigate their own behavior to disrupt oppressive systems," "recognize the responsibility to question normative school knowledge," and so on.⁸
- C. Pres. Pfeifer of Bethany Lutheran College recommended to the administrative judge that the "endorsement" language be softened into a "teach about" phrasing. However, given that there are so many offensive standards, "teaching about" this and "teaching about" that would still have a cumulative impact that weakens the conscience of teacher and student alike, and that forces both student and teacher to abandon a clear public confession on these matters of Christian doctrine. (Lutherans "believe, teach, and confess." Lutherans do not remain silent, and the certainly do not join the wicked in speaking Satan's lies.)
- D. In brief, the board concludes that there is no "middle ground" to be sought. PELSB itself has refused to listen to the public outcry against the new standards (e.g., August-September 2022 public hearing, with oral and written comments). PELSB's only modification of its proposed policy has been non-substantive shifts, such as from "features, highlights, and uses" LGBT-affirming curricula to "demonstrates an ability to feature, highlight, and use"—that difference matters in the world of pedagogy ("the student shall demonstrate..." is a common catchphrase), but it does nothing to answer the concerns voiced by Pres. Pfeifer of BLC or others in the public who objected to the promotion of immorality.
- E. Moreover, the board recognizes that PELSB's new standards were not introduced tentatively or flexibly by one isolated agency trying out new ideas, but rather as a concerted effort to bypass the failed attempt of radical reformers to pass similar standards through the legislative process, in order to orchestrate a complete overhaul of the educational system, consistent with the Equity 2030 initiative intended for "every Minnesota State college and university," etc.⁹
- F. Indeed, Dr. MacPherson's recent meetings with confessional Lutheran church leaders in Scandinavia reveals that they see the LGBT aspects of "Wokism" (yes, that was their own term for it) as the #1 threat facing the church today: in Finland, the biblical position is hate speech, resulting in the prosecution of a member of parliament; in Sweden, homeschooling is illegal and approved schools must promote LGBT; in Norway a recent hate speech law is moving the way of Finland; only in Denmark was Dr. MacPherson able to give the speech he gave concerning Romans 1 and 2 with any hope of government protection for the right to speak publicly in support of biblical morality and natural law.
- G. Even if PELSB's own leadership is not actively seeking to be part of any sort of national or international effort to force LGBTism upon teachers and students, nevertheless influential groups who pressure agencies such as PELSB are taking their cue from the the Yogyakarta

8 PELSB proposal, *passim*.

9 See <https://www.minnstate.edu/Equity2030/index.html>.

Principles of the United Nations or similar sources, as the confessional Lutheran remnant in Norway recognizes very clearly.¹⁰ So, we are not dealing with an accident of bureaucratic carelessness, but a very intentional policy aimed at forcing people to reject God's ways.

- H. Even more fundamentally, PELSB has transformed the very purpose of education from teaching content knowledge to indoctrinating teachers in a Marxist worldview that opposes core tenets of the Christian faith.
- III. The ELS Board for Apologetics and Worldviews has adopted a resolution recommending the following courses of action and authorizing the director to represent this position when meeting with the PELSB Working Group.
- A. Seek legal remedy by joining as plaintiffs in a First Amendment case that asks the court to protect the colleges' and the teachers' and the students' rights to religious free exercise (Free Exercise Clause) and to restrict the state from the establishment of its own religion (No Establishment Clause). We are aware that the following legal team has already been in contact with Bethany Lutheran College and furthermore has the recommendation of Julie Quist at the Child Protection League: the Upper Midwest Law Center, <https://www.umlc.org>.
- B. Refuse to implement the new standards.
1. Even to pay lip service and fill out a worksheet for re-certification of an Elementary Education Program would be going too far. It dulls the conscience to play along, even if sincerely hoping to "slip between the cracks."
 - a. The remedy must be sought in the public courts established under Romans 13, not by any private means. "The Gospel forbids private redress. ... Public redress ... is commanded." (Apol. XVI, 59–60)
 - b. The remedy must be public in order to maintain a clear confession. The public knows what PELSB's stance is. For Lutheran colleges to advertise their programs as complying with PELSB's standards sends a message to the public that those colleges consider PELSB's policies consistent with Christian doctrine. So, unless PELSB's standards are modified—e.g., by a court order—Lutheran colleges must distance themselves from PELSB. "At the time of confession, when the enemies of God's Word desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, Christians ... are bound by God's Word to confess freely and openly the doctrine ... they must not yield." (FC SD X, 10)
 2. Because this is a matter of clear theological confession, we must resist any temptation toward equivocation or compromise. Even if it might be true in some appropriate definition of terms that we wish to avoid "systemic racism" or "welcome transgender students" (in order to share Law and then Gospel with them, for example—not what PELSB means by

¹⁰ "The Foundation of the Church and the Bedrock of Human Existence: A Declaration on Heterosexual Marriage, and an Appeal to Parliament and the Government to Preserve Parental Rights and Freedom of Religion and Expression," 2020. This document seeks relief from the tyrannical imposition of new national laws that would prevent or dissuade Christians from teaching biblical chastity. The authors reference the Yogyakarta Principles, which include statements substantially identical to the new PELSB rules. See https://data.unaids.org/pub/manual/2007/070517_yogyakarta_principles_en.pdf. Indeed, the very purpose of the Yogyakarta Principles and the "Plus 10" supplement is to urge governments to "ensure inclusion of comprehensive, affirmative," etc. "curricula" and to require also of "teacher training and continuing professional development programmes" that "diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics" are affirmed and protected. See *The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10*, p. 19, http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf.

“welcoming”), nonetheless the current state of controversy demands that we renounce with clarity the opposition’s position, in accordance with the principles to which the Lutheran church subscribes in Formula of Concord, Article X: “Idolaters are confirmed in their idolatry” if the church remains silent or if the church employs equivocal language; therefore, the church must speak openly and clearly. (FC SD X, 16)

3. Aside from any “politicization” this issue may take in the public forum, it remains for us Christians first and foremost a First Commandment issue: we must not bow to the idols of the schoolhouse. We hold steadfast to God’s Word regardless of red states vs. blue states or any other controversy around us. The church’s stand is theologically clear:

“We will continue to publicly teach and teach in accordance with [God’s creation]. Christian churches cannot enter into any ‘social contract’ with the state which would bind them to compliance with state laws or ideology which is in conflict with the Word of God. ...

It is a grave abuse against children and youth to allow them to be subjected to correction treatment [i.e., sex-change hormones/surgery], sometimes against the parents’ wishes. Such treatment is irreversible, may cause serious long-term side-effects and lead to life-long sterility. To allow young people in puberty to undergo such treatment would be a form of genital mutilation. ...

Parents and teachers must not be required, against their conscience, to subject children to instruction in a radical gender theory which in reality leads them into a view of reality and a life stance which is deeply alien to the Christian faith.”¹¹

- C. If III.A (lawsuit) fails, then III.B (refusal to implement) likely will result in PELSB revoking our colleges’ certification to train students for teaching licensure; therefore, it would be prudent to explore alternative pathways toward training future teachers, especially for our parochial schools.
 1. Criteria for synod certification should be reviewed and modified, as may be necessary, to ensure that candidates for parochial teaching positions do not require credentialing from the state. (State credentialing may have seemed useful from a practical standpoint in the past, but under the new PELSB rules, state credentialing interferes with the church’s mission.)
 2. Other certification programs should be considered for adoption, such as the “Marks of Excellence” prepared by the Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education.¹²
 3. Conversations with other Lutheran church leaders should continue, so that we may mutually encourage each other and offer advice for identifying which models work best for which schools:
 - a. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary is not accredited and is willing to admit students who do not hold an accredited bachelor’s degree. Dr. MacPherson knows of another North American Lutheran seminary that is exploring this same approach, now that typical B.A. degrees are so saturated with content opposed to Christ.

11 “The Foundation of the Church and the Bedrock of Human Existence,” Parts III and IV. See PDF link in prior footnote.

12 See <http://www.ccle.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/BenchMarks-for-Excellence-Marks-of-a-Classical-and-Lutheran-Educator-revised-06202014.pdf>.

- b. Concordia University Nebraska operates an education program that pursues state licensing¹³ as well as a separate program that trains for parochial schools without state licensing.¹⁴
- c. The Danish Bible Institute was rejected for Danish accreditation because of its teaching of biblical inspiration and inerrancy, but accepted for accreditation in Norway: as a result, Danish students have to pay their own tuition, but Norwegian and Swedish students qualify for government aid on the basis of the Norwegian accreditation. (Ironically, what DBI teaches is virtually illegal in Norway now, but Norway rather than Denmark accredits DBI!)
- d. In brief, “be wise as serpents, but innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16), and be willing to sacrifice “our life, goods, fame...” (“A Mighty Fortress”) for the sake of fidelity to God’s Word, which alone has power to change hearts and save souls.

13 See <https://www.cune.edu/academics/undergraduate/elementary-education>.

14 See <https://www.cune.edu/academics/undergraduate/classical-liberal-arts>.