



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

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Chairmen Owens and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Michael Heilman and I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). You are probably more familiar with my predecessor Mr. Elroy Burkle. I will not claim to have his grasp of school transportation funding but will use his expertise and past work to support my testimony.

Transportation is not an issue for just our small schools, it is a significant expense for all school districts providing transportation. The 154-member schools of NDSOS reflect most of the smallest and a few of the larger districts in the state.

The funding level in HB 1027 is identical to the funding level from the 2019 and 2017 legislative sessions. This is understandable given the current economic climate; however, transportation expenses continue to increase and NDSOS would support and greatly appreciate any increase to transportation funding.

The included tables reflect the historical funding for transportation and comparative funding for foundation aid from 2009 to 2021. State support for transportation goes back many decades and has gone from a high of 69.14% (92-93) to 39.67% in 18-19. While the state support for all programs (pupil aid, transportation, career and technical education, special education and other) has increased to 61%.

NDSOS supports HB 1027 with the recommended adjustments by Senator Schaible on page one to ensure that the next biennium reflects the better of the 2018-19 school year, or the prior year, whichever is greater.

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.