

HB1375

House Education Committee

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Chairman Owens and Committee Members: My name is Erica Solberg and I am the student board member on the State Board of Higher Education. I'm here today in support of HB1375. This bill would enable all North Dakota students, regardless of economic status, the ability to take college courses while in high school and in turn, graduate college and enter the workforce at a significantly faster rate.

I am sure you all have seen headlines and articles describing the problems in higher education. One of the problems I most see in articles is students graduating with their undergraduate not in four years, but rather, in six and sometimes eight years with massive student loan debt. According to the National Center for Education Studies, only about 44% of first-time bachelor's degree recipients complete their degree in four years or less.¹ The longer a student is in college for their bachelor's degree and not seeking advanced degrees the more debt they accrue and less years they earn an income.

Higher Education is meant to equip students with knowledge of a skill or discipline so they join the workforce, and begin stimulating and expanding the economy. North Dakota has immense workforce shortages, and by supporting financially and thus motivating students to take undergraduate courses in high school, we can fill these shortages at much faster rates and help students drastically reduce student loan debt.

This bill is especially important to me as I myself participated in dual credit classes while in high school. These courses prepared me for the rigor of college as well as will enable me to graduate from NDSU with my bachelor's degree in three years with no debt. Dual credit courses for me were the

best preparation for college because they are actual college courses taught with the same schedule and syllabus as a college class, and often taught by professors. These courses also enable students to take significantly more college classes in high school since they are half a semester, like actual college courses, unlike AP, or Advanced Placement, classes that take a full year to complete for the same amount of credits.

By passing HB1375, more North Dakota students like myself will earn college credit in high school, graduate from our university system at a faster rate with less debt. This bill too will help with declining enrollment at our college and strengthen our economy by increasing our educated and skilled workforce.

I respectfully request a do pass on HB1375 and am available to answer your questions. Thank you.

ⁱ "Fast Facts." National Center for Educational Statistics. U.S. Department of Education, 2019.
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=569>.