



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

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SB 2332

Testimony in support with amendment

Michael Heilman – Executive Director North Dakota Small Organized School

February 2, 2021

Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Michael Heilman. I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). I represent 154-member school districts of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. NDSOS stands in support of SB 2232 with the amendments suggested by Dr. Katherine Terras.

NDSOS member schools have been dealing with shortages of teachers in most areas for the better part of two decades. I was curious what NDSOS member schools might say to a quick two question survey conducted yesterday.

Informal Survey conducted February 1, 2021 by North Dakota Small Organized School.

- Have you had difficulty filling teaching positions?
Yes 50 + No 3
- What are the teaching areas of greatest need?
 - a. Special Ed 17
 - b. Math 15
 - c. Science 15
 - d. Music 13
 - e. CTE(Ag, FACS, Tech) 11
 - f. Elementary 9

Other areas of need with 1-5 responses: Art, ELA, Counselor, Business, Early Childhood, Para’s, Bus Drivers, Nurse, Administrators, Custodians.

Comments from emails:

- 3 years no applicant
- Had one applicant, not qualified
- Left Ag Science position open last year
- It takes up most of my time (recruiting and hiring qualified staff)

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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.

- Special Ed is by far # 1, without a doubt.
- Used to get 10 applicants, now we're lucky to get three
- Had a math and elementary position unfilled. Retirements will make 21/22 difficult
- Any position needing a pulse

The quick responses told me that teacher and staff shortage is a main concern for our schools. Having multiple state approved options for training teachers and para's will definitely benefit schools and students.

I was on the Educational Standards and Practices Board from 2010 to 2014. During that time the ESPB implemented changes that allowed for additional pathways for teachers to become certificated in an attempt to address teacher shortages, unfortunately shortages still exist and, in many cases, have become worse.

Removal of the "Effective through July 31, 2023" language allows state approved alternative certification programs like Certification Central, and other programs to operate and provide for the staffing needs our rural schools.

NDSOS supports SB 2332 and the proposed amendment to ensure alternative certification programs are state approved and meet program approval standards and requirements set by the board for teacher education programs for the licensure of educators. I will stand for questions.

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