

March 6, 2023

I write in support of the **funding for the Red River Valley Writing Project** in **SB 2013**, specifically, in support of the bill's pass-through grant supporting funding for North Dakota's two sites of the National Writing Project.

I directed the Red River Valley Writing Project for twelve years and saw its tremendous impact on K-12 teachers at all grades and in all subject areas. The writing project supports a unique model of teacher development, training teachers to teach best practices to other teachers. It recognizes North Dakota's best teachers for the excellent work they already do and helps them spread that work to others.

There are two points I would like to emphasize:

1. The writing projects are a **smart investment**, offering excellent return on their funding. They provide match for federal and other national-level grants to come to North Dakota. These fund programs that not only train teachers in best practices for preparing career- and college-ready students, but also train those teachers to pass their learning on to other teachers, amplifying the effect of the investment. Money that supports a summer institute of 20 teachers enables each of those teachers to return to their schools and engage in large-scale staff training.
2. The writing projects are a lifeline for **rural teachers**. So often canned continuing education programs for teachers do not respect or even acknowledge the specific teaching situations in rural schools. The writing projects, on the other hand, work with teachers to design the best instruction for the specific contexts in which they live and work. North Dakota's rural students receive better literacy instruction because of the opportunities the writing projects offer to acknowledge and develop the skills of their teachers.

The writing projects have been supported by the North Dakota legislature for decades. Please continue this important work. It would be a shame to see such a supportive network for North Dakota's teachers dismantled, after 25 years of effort to establish and sustain it.

Respectfully,

Kim Donehower

Former Director, Red River Valley Writing Project