



1 Testimony in Opposition

2 HB 1337 – Safety Measures Required Allocation

3 Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee – for the record my
4 name is Dr. Aimee Copas and I serve as the executive director for the North Dakota
5 Council of Educational Leaders serving our K12 school leaders and directors.

6 I come to you today to express concerns with HB 1337 and the ability or need schools
7 would have to implement such legislation. This bill would require that 15% of the state
8 aid payments go to school safety as outlined in the bill. This is yet another bill that
9 works against local decision making. Every district has different needs regarding how to
10 expend their dollars. This is doubled down by a requirement since Senator Hoeven was
11 governor that each per-pupil increase that we receive as districts that 80% of that must
12 be spent in increases to teacher salaries. With those basic premises in place, with what
13 money should we focus on student education? In 2013 when the funding formula was
14 recalibrated it was done on the assumption of the per-pupil payment anchored in
15 providing the academic pieces of success. Those dollars allocated did not ever take into
16 consideration behavioral health, discipline issues, safety, or similar interests. Without
17 a new allocation, what should take the cut to make this work? Under this concept,
18 Bismarck would be forced to spend nearly \$28M of their \$186M dollar budget on school
19 safety, training, PD, safety purchases and the like on an ongoing basis. This is basically
20 like exchanging 280 current teachers for the same number of SRO's. In our estimation
21 as school leaders, this is not an appropriate expenditure of taxpayer dollars that are
22 meant to go toward the academic preparation of our students. In West Fargo they'd have
23 to displace 250 full time employees and hire up to 200 SRO's. This is an expenditure of

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1 approximately \$5M more than the entire West Fargo Police Department. I implore you
2 – is this reasonable in education? As educators we don't think so.

3 In the 2019 legislative session, it was passed to allow for a simple majority vote of the
4 people an opportunity to levy 5 additional mills to manage “safety”. There is a modality
5 to raise monies if a local community deems it to be a priority. To mandate this
6 expenditure is not what we'd deem as reasonable and expenditures that we can feel good
7 about explaining to our local taxpayers.

8 Again, as I've said in so many bills so far – please entrust the decisions regarding schools
9 to the locally elected officials charged with running those districts. These individuals
10 know best how district budgets should be expended. Continue to maintain the
11 importance of local control and local decision making for each community. It is this that
12 has been a part of making North Dakota great – let's keep a good thing going.

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