



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

Testimony before the House Education Committee

HB 1494
January 30, 2023

Chairman Heinert and members of the Committee, I am Nick Archuleta and I serve as president of North Dakota United. I appear before you today to urge a ***do pass*** recommendation for HB 1494.

Mr. Chairman, a few years ago, Dr. Jason Boynton, a ND United member and associate professor of Mathematics at NDSU, founded Lunch Aid after reading a story about lunch debt in the Fargo Public schools. Lunch Aid brought local musicians and fans together raise money to retire lunch debts of children whose lunch accounts had negative balances. As Jason and other food insecurity advocates delved deeper into the issue, they discovered that some schools substituted a cheese or peanut butter sandwich for the regular lunch when a student's lunch account was in arrears. Some children were directed to a table with lunch bags to retrieve their alternative meal.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, lunch debt is not the child's fault. It is not their responsibility to put money in their lunch accounts. Yet, some kids in North Dakota are made to feel the shame associated with not being able to afford lunch. Lunch shaming causes some kids to simply skip lunch and we all know that kids who are hungry are not focused on learning.

Chairman Heinert, we would not need HB 1494 if HB 1491 were already the law and all lunches were provided, as they should be. Unfortunately, it is not. HB 1494, in the meantime, provides us an avenue to eliminate lunch shaming and for that reason, I urge a ***do pass*** recommendation for HB 1494.