

Testimony in Support of SB 2284 – House Education Committee

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, for the record my name is Bob Marthaller, representing North Dakota United.

Chairman Heinert, North Dakota United is pleased to provide testimony in general support of SB 2284, and we wish to thank you and Senator Schaible as well as Senator Elkin and Representative Nathe for your leadership and efforts to provide quality educational opportunity for North Dakota students. The members and leadership of North Dakota United, also want to thank you for your support and efforts to provide adequate and equitable financial resources to public schools and school districts. Your efforts have made it possible for school boards, administrators, teachers, and many other school staff to continue working to provide the best possible education system for North Dakota students.

Chairman Heinert and members of the committee, North Dakota United believes that North Dakota teachers are among the best in the nation. Along with parental and community support and involvement, we believe our education system and quality instruction provided by North Dakota teachers, will have our students choice ready and graduate ready to pursue additional formal education or training, enter the military, or become a part of the state workforce.

We also recognize the work is not complete and there is much left to be done. Education is a continuous process and for our students to be prepared to pursue multiple opportunities, adequate and equitable resources must be made available. Services such as career counseling, special education related resources and supports for students with learning

challenges, mental health and other student supports, resources for critical infrastructure such as technology and safe and functional facilities must be supported and expanded.

Teachers and school support staff are critical to the mission, and we must do the best that we can to support them, including providing a competitive compensation and benefit package. We know that our state is challenged by teacher shortages at every level and in all content areas and we also know that providing increases in funding for salary and benefits will help to recruit and retain quality individuals. To this end, North Dakota United requests that the State of North Dakota provide financial resources to local school districts at the highest extent possible.

That's why North Dakota United wishes to propose a significant increase in funding for public school districts, increases in funding that local school boards can manage at the local level in support of education in their communities.

SB 2284, (version .03000) sets the state rate at \$10,544 per weighted student units for the 2023-24 school year and \$10,860 for the 2024-25 school year.

Chairman Heinert and members of the committee, North Dakota United respectfully asks that the rate for the 2023-24 school year be set at \$11,056 per weighted student unit and for the 2024-25 school year, the rate be set at \$11,940. These rates represent about an 8% increase for each year of the biennium and, with the help of the professional staff at the Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota United estimates the additional cost for the biennium to be approximately \$346 million.

At North Dakota United we recognize this is a huge number for the House Education Committee to consider. However, North Dakota United believes this number is attainable and

we hope for your serious consideration as SB 2284 moves forward for further debate and deliberation.