

SB 2284

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, March 13, 2023

Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent

Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee.

My name is Kirsten Baesler. I am the North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction, and I am here to speak in support of SB 2284 with one amendment related to Section 1.

The State Superintendent is the Executive Director & Secretary for the State Board of Public School Education and is directed by the ND Legislature to carry out NDCC Chapter 15.1-01 – State Board of Public School Education.

The State Board of Public School Education's most significant work is working with county superintendents and the recommendations coming from county committees appointed by county commissioners and county superintendents, mostly related to property annexations, school re-organizations, and school consolidations.

At first blush, it may seem harmless to change the boundary designations from **county jurisdictions** to **legislative districts**, but as you can see, there is a clear through-line that exists from **county** jurisdictions to the State Board of Public School Education.

After visiting with the Association of Counties, it is important they be involved in this work before any changes are made to this section of NDCC to ensure their members' interests are represented.

It may also appear to be a good idea to have local superintendents on the State Board of Public School Education, ...but it may not be.

County Commissioners do not appoint local school superintendents to sit on their County Annexation Committees, and they may have a good reason. Or they may not. But no one has asked them.

Requiring that a certain number of members of the State Board of Public School Education be members of the North Dakota Council of Education Leaders Association of School Administrators drastically reduces the number of eligible applicants to this board, reducing the selection pool of applicants from a minimum of 17,000 qualified electors from each jurisdiction to approximately 28.

As the Executive Director & Secretary of the State Board of Public School Education, who is tasked by the legislature to “*call meetings [of the State Board of Public School Education] as necessary, carry out the policies of the board, and employ personnel necessary to perform the board's duties.*” I, too, need to be involved with the critical discussion and work of making any changes to the jurisdictional boundaries and the composition requirements of the board members.

Prior to the filing of SB 2284, I was not aware this change was being proposed to the 68th Assembly to consider.

The need to involve more stakeholders in this important and significant work is evident. I respectfully request that SB 2284 be amended.

Mr. Chairman, an official amendment has been drafted, and I will look to you to determine the appropriate time to address removing the existing language in Section 1 and replace it with the following:

SECTION 9. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - STATE BOARD OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION. During the 2023-24 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying the historical and current composition and geographical distribution of the state board of public school education and county education committees. The study must include the composition and geographical distribution of education boards in other states. The study must include input from state, county, and local stakeholders. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations to the sixty-ninth legislative assembly."