

My name is Jennifer Kallenbach and I am a high school social studies teacher at Kidder County High School in Steele, North Dakota. I am here this afternoon to sing the praises of the We the People program and ask for your support in expanding its funding.

Today I would like to share with you the benefits of We the People for North Dakota teachers and students. I was first introduced to this program after my first year of teaching. I was young, inexperienced, and needed a continuing education credit to keep my license, so I signed up for the We the People Summer Teaching Institute in 2010. Attending that summer program changed the trajectory of my teaching for the better, and I have attended the institute every year since. At the summer institute, I gain deep instruction from Constitutional scholars to expand my content knowledge which I can in turn share with my students. Furthermore, I have developed connections and lasting friendships with other teachers from around the state. This may seem like a minor point, but as a social studies teacher in a small school, I don't have a team of colleagues down the hall to lesson plan with or to ask advice. But I do have my We the People colleagues who are just a text or phone call away. This is significant because studies show that one of the top reasons young teachers leave the profession within the first five years is a lack of support and mentorship. This program provided me with meaningful support from like minded teachers. That combination of quality continuing education and camaraderie has kept me in this profession.

Clearly, I am beyond grateful for the benefits this program has provided me, still, its true value lies in the opportunities it provides for our North Dakota students. Through We the People, I see daily the career-ready skills my students are mastering. Students in my classroom work collaboratively as a team to research and problem-solve. They learn to communicate effectively both written and verbally. They debate and discuss differing ideas while maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect.

As I mentioned, I work in a small school, and I love the support our community and school gives to our student-athletes, but we don't always have the same opportunities to challenge and cheer on students at high-level academic contests. The We the People Congressional Hearing Competition that goes along with this textbook does just that. I have students at the beginning of the year who can not imagine presenting an oral statement even to their own classmates, but by the time we get to the competition in January, I watch them confidently discussing constitutional principles and current events issues with North Dakota Supreme Court Justices, professors, and lawyers from around our state. It's often my proudest day of the year. I love that with the materials provided through the We the People curriculum I can set high expectations for students and watch them meet my expectations, often exceeding them, because the program has provided me with the necessary resources to give my students a high level of support.

Most importantly, this program teaches young people how to be active, engaged, and educated citizens in their local, state, and national government. Our challenge in 2023 is not much different than when the Constitution was written in 1787. As the legend has it, upon leaving the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin was asked what type of government the Framers had created. He replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it." I'm here today to assert that the We the People program is the perfect curriculum to teach students how to keep our Republic vibrant and to participate in it with a spirit of civil discourse.

I encourage you to support expanding funding for this program so that it can reach more students and teachers in our state. Thank you.