

Testimony House Bill 1156 – Senate Education Committee

Senator Elkin, Chairman

March 1, 2023

Chair Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dr. Alyssa Martin. I am here on behalf of the North Dakota Center for Distance Education to testify in support of this bill. It will allow CDE to do two things: provide dual credit to out-of-state students and serve as a kindergarten provider for a district that does not offer this grade.

While CDE currently has authority under NDCC 15-19-01(03) to provide services to out-of-state students, it does not have authority to offer dual credit to these students. CDE learned this fall that state law limits North Dakota high schools to only providing dual credit to in-state students (NDCC 15.1-25-01). To provide dual credit to out-of-state students, CDE needs this permission added to the scope of services it can provide under the law in NDCC 15-19-01. Our out-of-state students have inquired about participating in this program, and CDE would like to offer these students this opportunity. We anticipate approximately ten out-of-state students participating in our dual credit courses initially, expanding along with our plans to expand our dual credit partnerships. If this legislation should pass this bill, we will work with the NDUS office to propose an out-of-state dual credit tuition rate, which would then need the approval of the NDUS Board. This will allow the tuition we raise from out-of-state students to help subsidize the services we provide to in-state students and, long term may help boost enrollment in our NDUS institutions.

The PK-12 Education Steering Committee has a strategic goal of increasing the number of kindergarten classrooms statewide. The request to allow CDE to serve as a kindergarten provider to districts unable to provide this grade aligns with this goal and comes from CDE recently adding a full kindergarten curriculum to its menu of services. CDE began kindergarten in 2020. We have 30 students in our program this year and have the capacity to accommodate more than double this amount—CDE had 73 kindergarteners in 2021-22. Given that we have this capacity and there are seven school districts in the state without kindergarten, we knew we could provide an essential service to school districts that are not offering kindergarten and contemplating transporting these students to a nearby school to receive this crucial formative education. We are projecting that this change to the law will only benefit a small number of students—less than 10. Still, for these students, the ability to take kindergarten online through CDE may be a better alternative than a long daily bus ride for our youngest learners.

CDE's primary goal and mission is to provide educational access to students and fill in gaps in services within our local school districts. This bill helps CDE accomplish these aims.