



Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill No. 1333, which proposes requiring a minimum of thirty minutes for student school lunch periods. While we appreciate the intent to ensure students have sufficient time to eat and recharge, we believe this mandate would create significant logistical challenges and unintended consequences for schools across North Dakota.

First, the scheduling difficulties this bill would impose on schools cannot be overstated. Extending lunch periods to a mandatory thirty minutes would disrupt carefully crafted schedules, potentially reducing instructional time, interventions, and extensions. Many schools already struggle to fit all required subjects, enrichment opportunities, and intervention times into the school day. This additional requirement would force administrators to make difficult decisions that could negatively impact academic and developmental opportunities for students.

Second, the supervision of students during extended lunch periods poses a significant concern. Schools often face challenges ensuring adequate staffing to monitor lunchrooms, hallways, and outdoor spaces. Lengthening lunch periods would require additional supervision time from teachers and support staff.

Additionally, longer lunch periods may inadvertently lead to increased instances of students breaking school rules. Unstructured time is often when disciplinary issues arise, including misuse of electronic devices, conflicts between peers, and other behavior problems. Extending the lunch period without additional resources for supervision and structured activities would likely increase these issues, creating more work for staff and administrators while detracting from the positive, safe environment schools strive to maintain.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that schools already prioritize student well-being and ensure reasonable lunch periods within the constraints of their unique schedules and resources. Imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate fails to account for the diverse needs and circumstances of schools across the state. Local control allows school leaders to design schedules that best meet the needs of their students, staff, and communities.

In closing, we respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the implementation of House Bill No. 1333. While we share the goal of supporting students' health and well-being, this proposed legislation introduces challenges that could ultimately hinder the educational experience and environment for both students and staff. Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective.