

March 20th, 2025

Senate Education Committee
North Dakota Legislative Assembly
600 East Boulevard Ave
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chairman Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Jessica Nolz, I have been a Special Education Strategist with Grand Forks Public Schools for over 10 years. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1530. This bill is crucial to addressing the overwhelming workload, safety concerns, and staffing shortages that special education professionals face on a daily basis.

Special education professionals dedicate themselves to ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support they need to thrive. However, the increasing workload has made it nearly impossible to provide the individualized attention that these students deserve. The excessive paperwork requirements alone take up a significant portion of special education teachers' time that could be spent engaging directly with students. IEPs, FBAs, BIPs, evaluations, and compliance documentation have grown in complexity, and without sufficient support, educators are drowning in administrative tasks instead of teaching and supporting students effectively.

Beyond workload concerns, student and staff safety is a critical issue that HB1530 seeks to address. Many of us have encountered situations where students with behavioral challenges require immediate intervention, yet due to understaffing, adequate support is not always available. I have personally witnessed instances where staff members have been injured due to a lack of available personnel to safely manage crisis situations. The lack of proper staffing does not just endanger educators—it also jeopardizes the well-being of students who require specialized support to navigate their learning environments.

Paraprofessionals are the backbone of special education classrooms, providing direct support to students with disabilities. However, due to chronic understaffing, paraprofessionals are often stretched too thin, taking on responsibilities beyond their training and capacity. In many cases, they are expected to manage behaviors, implement complex accommodations, and provide academic support, all while balancing an unsustainable workload. This has led to high turnover rates, further exacerbating the staffing crisis and leaving students without consistent, trained support.

HB 1530 is a necessary step toward addressing these pressing issues. By ensuring that workloads are manageable, safety concerns are prioritized, and paraprofessional staffing is adequately funded and supported, we can create a more sustainable and effective special education system for both educators and students.

I urge you to support HB 1530 and take action to protect the integrity of special education services in North Dakota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Nolz

Special Education Strategist
Grand Forks Public Schools