



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

**Testimony Before the Senate Education Committee
HB 1530
Tuesday, March 25, 2025**

Chairman Beard and members of the Committee, for the record I am Nick Archuleta, president of ND United. I am happy to appear before you today in support of HB 1530 and to encourage a do pass recommendation for this long overdue legislation.

Members of the Committee, as you know, North Dakota and every other state remain in the grip of a persistent shortage of teachers that make it difficult to provide the educational services our students need and deserve. This is especially true in the area of Special Education or SPED. In an effort to better understand the particular challenges faced by the professional special educators, ND United staff led by Amber Haskell and Matt Leible formed the ND United Special Education Collective.

To better inform their work, Amber and Matt conducted a survey of special education professionals between January 10 and February 10 of this year. They received responses from 297 teachers who represented 26 of the 31 special education units in ND. The respondents were special education teachers, paraprofessionals, early childhood SPED teachers, speech language pathologists, OTs, PTs, and school psychologists.

Here are some highlights from ND United's Special Educator Survey:

- *71% report their workload has increased since they began working in special education.*
- *86% report they currently feel overwhelmed by their special education workload.*
- *44% report they are considering leaving special education.*
- *56% report their mental health is adversely affected by their current role in special education.*
- *63% of respondents who are responsible for supervising and training paraprofessionals report that they do not have the time or tools to adequately do so.*

- 78% report that the shortage of paraprofessionals adds stress to their jobs.
- 59% report they are unable to take their duty-free lunch 3 or more days a week due to time spent providing direct services to students, responding to crisis, completing due process paperwork, completing observations, meetings, lack of paraprofessional support, or other required duties.
- 74% report they are unable to utilize their scheduled prep time 3 or more days a week for the reasons listed above.
- 85% report they know colleagues who have left special education.
- 83% report their district is having difficulty filling special education positions.
- 81% report that caseloads are a significant factor in the shortage of special education teachers.

Chairman Beard and members of the Committee, HB 1530, if passed, will address the challenges outlined in our survey and more. Our hope is that by doing a deep dive into the circumstances and needs of SPED professionals, we will be able to develop strategies designed to mitigate the challenges of special educators and draw more talented and caring individuals into the field.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will conclude my testimony and urge a ***do pass*** recommendation for HB 1530.