

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1188
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

January 18, 2021

**By: Mary McCarvel-O'Connor, Special Education Assistant Director
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Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mary McCarvel-O'Connor, and I am the Special Education Assistant Director with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to speak on behalf of the ND Department of Public Instruction in favor of HB 1188 regarding amending and reenacting the North Dakota Century Code to include special education technicians.

The ND Department of Public Instruction currently issues special education paraprofessional certificates for paraprofessionals who demonstrate completion of twenty contact hours of in-service training with one calendar year of employment. The classes that help prepare them to receive the certificate for paraprofessional include: Student support concepts, human growth and development and the impact of disabilities, utilizing effective instructional strategies to serve students with disabilities in integrated settings and strengthening behavior. There are currently 2,202 special education paraprofessionals in the public schools.

This bill would allow special education paraprofessionals to receive additional training to become special education technicians which would allow

them to take on additional responsibilities and duties such as conduct academic and behavioral screenings, document student progress toward meeting identified goals and objectives, and assist the supervising special education teacher with regulatory paperwork as directed.

In November 2020, the ND Department of Public Instruction Office of Special Education surveyed the 31 special education units in North Dakota. The special education units indicated that there are 46.5 unfilled positions for special education teachers in North Dakota public schools. These unfilled positions include the number of positions that were filled due the shortage by outside services such as telepractice. The ND Department of Public Instruction is currently helping to fund the para-to-teacher pathway pilot project at Minot State University. Ideal candidates for this program are paraprofessionals with an associate degree.

In accordance with Administrative Rule 67-11-20-05, the ND Department of Public Instruction Office of Special Education currently administers certificates to speech language pathology paraprofessionals working in ND public schools. The certificate requires 30 hours of general education classes including oral and written communication, mathematics, psychology, and the biological and health sciences, 30 hours of college education in the area of speech-language pathology, including classes in anatomy, physiology of speech, language, swallowing and hearing mechanisms, communication development, introduction of clinical processes and

fundamentals of human behavior management; and a minimum of one hundred clock-hours of fieldwork experience. The Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals certificate was created by the Speech-Language Pathology Task Force at ND Department of Public Instruction to help with Speech-Language Pathology Shortages in North Dakota. North Dakota has distributed 172 Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional certificates since its inception in 2003. There are currently 46 Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals working in North Dakota Public Schools. ND Department of Public Instruction stands ready to administer the necessary process to implement and issue certificates for special education technicians to assist in decreasing the number of shortages across the state to better our school districts and our students.

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony, and I will stand for any questions that you may have.