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**Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2215**  
**Presented to the House Education Committee**  
**Mr. Roger Haut, Board President, Jamestown Public School District #1**  
**March 17, 2021**

Good morning Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, my name is Roger Haut, I serve as the board president and lead negotiator for the Jamestown Public School Board, currently serving my 3rd term on the board. I am providing testimony in support of Senate Bill 2215.

I have become increasingly concerned with what appears to be a strategy to delay negotiations into the school year as a means of leverage, as opposed to working in good faith towards an agreement. While my testimony will provide context to what we experienced in Jamestown, my concerns extend to the delays that have occurred in other school districts as well.

In the last negotiations cycle in Jamestown in 2019, we began negotiations on May 9 and met another 4 times during the months of May and June and then once in the month of July. The time between these meetings averaged between 7 and 18 days. After the July 15 meeting, however, the delays stretched to 24 days to August 8 and then an additional 40 days to September 17. Further exacerbating the issue, the board received only three new negotiation proposals over the last five meetings, which covered 97 days. The board declared impasse on September 17, but we agreed to a request by the association to meet again on September 23. This meeting provided our first new proposal from the association in 46 days. As a result, the board negotiators engaged in discussions and reached an agreement that night.

24           While we eventually agreed in 2019, this should have been done much earlier. The  
25 delay tactics were unnecessary and ultimately counterproductive to good faith negotiations.  
26 Had the changes outlined in Senate Bill 2215 been in place in 2019, I feel certain that we would  
27 have obtained the same outcome. The only difference is that contracts would have been issued  
28 in July instead of October. Teachers would have been assured the terms of the agreement  
29 before starting the school year, the district would have been able to hire if new teachers would  
30 be needed, and students and families would have known, with certainty, who would be in that  
31 classroom on the first day of school.

32           I believe it is crucial to recognize that this bill still allows for school districts and  
33 education associations to negotiate after the deadline date when both sides agree to do so.  
34 Local control remains in place and I am certain that this allowable extension will be used as  
35 boards and associations work together through the challenges inherent in negotiations. The  
36 deadline, however, instills urgency to these discussions and a resolution that provides a path  
37 for districts to issue contracts prior to the beginning of the school year. Our school districts,  
38 communities, students, and teachers deserve to have these discussions prioritized in the  
39 manner that best provides a resolution.

40           I ask that you support providing a reasonable and flexible deadline that ensures contract  
41 negotiations between teachers and school boards can be completed in a comprehensive  
42 manner prior to the beginning of the next school year through a Do Pass Recommendation on  
43 Senate Bill 2215. I thank you for your time and I would be open to questions and may be  
44 reached through email at [Roger.Haut@k12.nd.us](mailto:Roger.Haut@k12.nd.us).