



1 **HB 1350 – Voter Approval for School Bonding**  
2 **NDCEL – Support 1/25/2021**

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4 Chairman Headland and members of the House Committee for Finance and Taxation. My name  
5 is Aimee Copas and I serve as the Executive Director for NDCEL supporting school leaders,  
6 administrators and directors in North Dakota,

7 I am here today to urge your support of HB 1350. North Dakota has a rich history of taking care  
8 of what we have. I'm sure most of your fathers knew how to fix a combine with a pliers and a roll  
9 of duct tape. During my life growing up on a dairy farm, I rarely saw my dad without those two  
10 trusty implements at his side. He was able to keep the most dilapidated equipment running. It was  
11 truly amazing. I spent so much time with him in the shop handing him tools, watching him try his  
12 darndest to keep things that had long outlived their life up and running. In around 2002, my brother  
13 moved back to the farm from Colorado with his family to help run the place (eventually having it  
14 traditionally handed down to him.). My brother was a diesel mechanic by trade in the US Army.  
15 He saw equipment and buildings he was working with and began to invest and upgrade. He  
16 explained to me that while we can save a bit and keep that stuff going, if we appropriately invest  
17 in our future – it can produce at a much higher rate. Implementing that with precision ag practices  
18 he's making the old family farm a place that now can support two families.

19 I reflect now on our schools. Many of our schools in ND have been very well taken care of. Some  
20 of them still in operation with their original bones for 60-80 years. However, as much as district  
21 leaders try to keep these schools running – over time they become inefficient, it is more challenging  
22 to keep them wired for technology, in many instances, they just aren't big enough. In a smaller  
23 community they serve as the central hub of their communities – a source of pride and joy.  
24 However, we've learned that in many instances, the difference between the much-needed update  
25 to school buildings is often falling short by a small handful of votes (repeatedly in many  
26 communities) as our schools have the highest threshold of any governing entity in ND to secure  
27 that approval build. In fact, the threshold of school bond approval rate that is one of the highest in  
28 the nation. In the United States, all but 11 states require some type of voter approval for school  
29 bonds. But of the remaining, only 6 require a simple majority vote to do so. In North Dakota –  
*NDCEL is the strongest unifying voice representing and supporting administrators and educational leaders in pursuit of quality education  
for all students in North Dakota.*

*Executive Director: Aimee Copas-----Assistant Director: Russ Ziegler*



1 only schools are required that high threshold to build. In our region, the only other state asking  
2 for a similar threshold is South Dakota.

3 This bill outlines a precedent already in place in North Dakota whereby the % vote required more  
4 appropriately aligns to city size rather than a blanket %. Remaining cognoscente and protecting  
5 our smaller communities, if the electorate of a district is less than 4000 people, it would still require  
6 that 60% supermajority threshold. However, in the instance where there are at least 4000 in  
7 population, that threshold would change to 57% and where there are 20,000 or more, that would  
8 adjust to 55%. Still far above that simple majority which is the standard for most states.

9 This would then align with school district the excess mill levy requirement in code which we  
10 believe would be an appropriate threshold for communities. We thank you for your consideration  
11 on this matter and urge a Do Pass recommendation on this bill.

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