

1 HB1427 – DJS – Relating to the Commission on Juvenile Justice and Children’s Cabinet

2 Mandan Public Schools – Carly Retterath Testimony

3 Good morning Chairman Klemin and members of the Judiciary committee. For the record, my
4 name is Carly Retterath. I am the Alternative Education Director for Mandan Public Schools. I
5 am here today to urge you to give HB 1427 a Do Pass recommendation.

6 As I stated in my previous testimony, three years ago, representatives from DJS approached
7 Mandan Public Schools about a pilot project they wanted to implement for at-risk youth. Their
8 idea was a school within a school that would provide wrap around services for students to keep
9 them in school and out of the court system. After a few months of planning, we implemented the
10 “Next Step” program in both Mandan High School and Mandan Middle School and expanded the
11 capacity of our alternative high school in the fall of 2019. With the joint funding support of DJS
12 and Mandan Public Schools we hired family liaisons, teachers, paraprofessionals and worked with
13 community partners to ensure we could provide students the services they needed to be successful.

14 In many ways’ schools are the ideal vehicle to provide evidenced-based community services to
15 youth and their families. Students in the K-12 system come from a wide array of home lives,
16 cultural backgrounds and family dynamics but school is the common ground for all of them.
17 Collaboration between community partners and the schools can result in a more streamlined
18 referral process, consistent services for students, better data collection on outcomes and a more
19 efficient use of resources. For this to become a reality school districts will require funding, training,
20 and technical support to create effective wrap around service model for students.

21 We have seen at both Mandan High School and Mandan Middle School that the wrap around
22 supports that are embedded into the Next Step program benefit all students. Any student has the
23 ability to access services offered through the program to help them navigate school and life. These
24 services include clinical counseling supports, social skills groups, academic interventions, and a
25 safe environment to go to when needed. In addition, the training resources supported through DJS
26 have allowed the district to provide professional development to staff that has had positive impacts
27 that have extended beyond the Next Step program.

28 Mandan School does have two School Resource Officers that work in all eight of our school
29 buildings. Because of the relationships that we are able to build with students in the Next Step
30 program and behavioral supports we provide, our SRO's involvement in the program has been
31 minimal. While schools and their communities will continue to need options for significant
32 delinquent youth, day treatment programs like Next Step have shown to be an effective
33 intervention for low risk youth offenders. An example of this success is a middle school student
34 who in the 2018-2019 school year was absent 62 times (23 unexcused) and had 56 tardies. After
35 participating in the Next Step program, this school year he has missed 11 days (0 unexcused) and
36 has had 2 tardies. Improved attendance like this is the most important step in getting a student on
37 track in school and in life.

38 Setting up a school within a school and having the supports in place to build relationships with
39 students to find out what they need to be successful is grounded in research and it is best practice.
40 Investing dollars on the front end to allow us to meet student needs so they can stay in school and
41 be successful will pay big dividends when students graduate high school and become productive
42 citizens in our society.

43 I urge you to give HB 1427 a DO PASS recommendation. I would be happy to stand for any
44 questions.