

Dear Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the privilege to speak today pertaining to House Bill 1192. My name is Tim Godfrey and I'm the superintendent of Kenmare Public Schools.

I'd like to start by saying I feel many districts across the state of North Dakota, especially smaller rural districts, already have the dismay of funding their operations. Many of those schools are not even on the funding formula due to their inability to levy taxes in the amount necessary to meet their annual expenses. Without the ability to adjust mill levies in accordance with the fluctuation of taxable valuation, more schools may fall into this situation in the future, thus costing the State more money.

Kenmare School District is going into a season of contract negotiations with our teaching staff. Each time this happens, we struggle to meet the needs of our staff in providing an adequate increase to their salaries and benefits to meet the costs of inflation. Two years ago, our health insurance costs increased by 18% causing us to begin the school year in a deficit. If HB 1192 were in place, I feel confident there is no way we would be able to meet our obligations of paying staff the amount they deserve and having the ability to attract and retain high caliber teachers.

Currently, by law, we are required to seek voter feedback each year pertaining to taxes levied by the school district. While we do so, begrudgingly at times, we accept that feedback and attempt to accommodate the needs of our stakeholders. This is good business and helps us maintain the relationships we need to support our success. HB 1192 would become costly to our district by causing us to hold a vote of the people each time we would need an increase our revenue from taxes.

There are already mechanism in place to provide property tax relief for the citizens of North Dakota. Since the inception of these mechanisms, the system has worked for both the taxpayer and the school district. I respectfully ask that you vote no on this bill so that school districts can continue to provide the revenue necessary to operate their schools and provide the education to our children needed to support their success in the future. Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Tim Godfrey

Superintendent

Kenmare Public Schools