



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

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Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my name is Michael Heilman and I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). NDSOS supports current levels of funding for Career and Technical Education programs that are vital to the students we serve. Any loss of funding for Career and Technical Education can force schools to make difficult decisions regarding course offerings in areas that are often related to the very careers many of our students will ultimately seek.

Many of the 154 member schools of NDSOS use the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE) to support their curriculum. Especially in this year when distance learning and hybrid schedules were the norm for many schools. Schools use NDCDE not just to enhance their curriculum by adding electives or to resolve scheduling conflicts, but in some cases NDCDE is the choice of schools for required coursework when qualified staff are not available. NDSOS opposes any cut in funding to NDCDE that could result in an increase in the cost of coursework for the schools.

My career in education was directly influenced by my high school experiences in what was then called vocational agriculture classes. I chose to become an Ag-Ed teacher and ultimately moved into educational administration. There is little doubt that I would not have made those choices had it not been for my experience in high school. For me it was teaching, but for others it may be welding, food science, carpentry, health careers, automotive technology, electronics or one of the many other Career and Technical Education programs.

As a principal I knew that I had the ability to accommodate a student's schedule when an unresolvable conflict existed by accessing coursework from the NDCDE. Yes, there are other options available to our schools, but why wouldn't we make every effort to use the program funded by our state. Maintaining funding is critical to staying competitive with other options. Thank you for the generous funding and the opportunities offered our students by Career and Technical Education and the North Dakota Center for Distance Education.

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.