

LEWIS & CLARK SCHOOL DISTRICT # 161

Lewis & Clark—Berthold
Berthold Elem. and High School
P.O. Box 185
Berthold, ND 58718
453-3484

Berthold, North Shore and Plaza Schools
Marc Ritteman, Superintendent
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Berthold, ND 58718

Lewis & Clark—North Shore Plaza
NSP Elem. And High School
P.O. Box 38
Plaza, ND 58771
497-3734

3/15/21

Chairman Schaible and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

For the record my name is Marc Ritteman. I am the superintendent of the Lewis and Clark School District, which is comprised of two K-12 schools located 30 miles apart: one in Berthold and one in Plaza. I am here today to speak in favor of an amendment to House Bill 1388 that would fund districts with separate and distant schools based on the enrollment of each facility, rather than the enrollment of the district.

The current funding formula is designed to ensure all students in North Dakota receive an adequate and equitable education regardless of the circumstances of their district. It shouldn't matter whether a district is rich or poor, large or small, all students in North Dakota should have access to an adequate and equitable education.

One the most important components of the formula that ensures adequacy and equity is the district size weighting factor adjustment. The legislature has recognized that "smaller school districts do not benefit from the [same] economies of scale [as] larger school districts" and are less efficient. District size weighting factors exist to account for this inefficiency and ensure small and large districts are funded at a level that leads to an adequate and equitable education for all students.

We strongly support the district size weighting factor adjustment, but unfortunately we also believe there is a flaw in the formula. It does not account for districts like ours that operate separate schools a great distance apart. Our district has about 400 students with about 200 at each school. The formula assumes we can operate as efficiently as a district with 400 students in the same facility and does not take into account the *30 miles* that separates our two halves. Although, we *do* share some staff and resources, the distance makes it impossible to create the same efficiencies we would see if we were in the same building.

If we were funded based on the individual enrollment of our separate and distant schools, about \$800,000 would be generated. This isn't "extra money". It's what the formula deems necessary for two districts of 200 to provide an adequate and equitable education. Up until this point, our transition minimum payment and increased local taxes have filled that void. Once transition minimum payments are eliminated completely, we will be left with a funding gap that cannot be filled to a level that is adequate and equitable.

We understand that transition minimums do not factor into the adequacy and equity equation, but their elimination has revealed a flaw in the *district size weighting factor* adjustment that hurts districts with separate and distant schools. That concludes my testimony. I will stand for questions.

Marc Ritteman, Supt.
Lewis and Clark School District