



1 HB 1388 – Funding Formula

2 NDCEL Testimony in Support

3 Chairman Schaible, members of the Senate Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dr.
4 Aimee Copas. I serve as the Executive Director for the ND Council of Educational Leaders
5 representing all our K12 school administrators, directors and school leaders.

6 HB 1388 is the result of much work done over the past 4 years with the K12 funding formula to
7 ensure the bill is supporting schools appropriately and also getting to legislative intent in getting
8 all schools on the formula and support in a common way on the formula. 4 district superintendents
9 and 1 business manager from the NDCEL Legislative Focus Group were invited to assist the
10 interim committee in their study this past session.

11 This bill continues to acknowledge challenges within our school funding model upholding last
12 session’s work on getting schools to on-time funding while caring for our declining enrollment
13 districts, an attempt at increasing the per-pupil payment, and it does also encapsulates the work
14 done during the interim on the K12 weighting factors.

15 Ensuring that there is the per-pupil increase at least in the amount proposed in the original version
16 of this bill is critically important. Each year, experienced a myriad of challenges along with that,
17 including for example, increasing staffing costs by honoring contracts already in place, increased
18 costs due to behavioral and mental health challenges, many districts with increasing enrollment
19 and still experiencing a funding mechanism that doesn’t yet completely recognize those students
20 until the next year.

21 While the 1% per pupil payment increase each year doesn’t solve all the problems it is a much-
22 needed shot in the arm of school district funding. Furthermore, with the discussions surrounding
23 the ESSER funds, it is important that all legislators remain cognoscente that the ESSER funds are
24 one-time federal dollars. It is the intention of our school leaders to target that money directly
25 toward acceleration of learning, property tax relief and debt reduction through infrastructure and

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for all students in North Dakota.*

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1 completion of deferred maintenance projects to the extent that it can positively impact a
2 community. However, as with other one-time funding, school districts should not negotiate or give
3 raises with those dollars. Once these funds are gone, they are gone. Hence, the 1%/1% per pupil
4 increase is the mechanism by which school boards will be able to provide the well-deserved pay
5 increases to their teachers. Furthermore, to appropriately continue to walk transition minimum
6 districts to the formula, it is critical that the per-pupil amount continues to grow as was the intent
7 back in 2013. The projected inflationary increase for the United States for 2021 is 2.24%, hence
8 the 1%, 1% will be vital to the ongoing operations of our schools.

9 As I just mentioned, this bill continues to move in the modality agreed upon last session to move
10 the 94 transition minimum districts to be on the formula. I hope we can all continue to recognize
11 that this will be very challenging for these districts. The weighting factor work has been a heavy
12 lift but an important one. As mentioned, the bill reflects the 7-year goal with the weighting factors
13 showing an increase for districts with fewer than 245 students. This has the most dramatic impact
14 on the transition minimum districts. This is taking no new money for the state as the 15% reduction
15 in transition minimum line represents the funds used to fuel the weighting factor adjustments.
16 Furthermore, the work done in this bill to support the transition maximum districts is helpful to
17 them as well and carves for them a pathway to being fully on the formula.

18 One final point is that this bill does address membership on the K12 coordination council. One of
19 the member types removed was a person who is a principal. We'd highly recommend that
20 principals still be included and perhaps could be reflected as the president of either the North
21 Dakota Association of Secondary School Principals (certified for grades 5-12) or North Dakota
22 Association of Elementary School Principals (certified for grades K-5).