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**Testimony on HB 1388
Senate Education Committee
March 15, 2021**

Chairman Schaible and members of the Committee, for the record I am Nick Archuleta, and I am the president of North Dakota United. I am appearing before you today to respectfully ask that you amend and then give a DO PASS recommendation to HB 1388.

Chairman Schaible, funding public education in the state of North Dakota is among the most important functions of the legislature. The members of North Dakota United are extremely appreciative of the efforts made by the legislature to ensure that teachers and educational support professionals have the resources they need to educate the students in our care. We are equally appreciative of the support that teachers and learners have received from parents and communities across the state as we worked hard to overcome the effects of interrupted face to face instruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now more than ever, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, North Dakota's schools need our investment. Soon, school districts will be analyzing data to determine the impact of interrupted learning on students in their communities. Based on that data, teachers and administrators will be implementing protocols to close learning gaps in hopes of getting our students to where they need to be on their academic continuum. This extra work to catch kids up, while making schools as safe as possible, will be difficult but will be well worth the effort if we improve educational outcomes and our school buildings.

The work ahead will be expensive, and our members are concerned that HB 1388 left the House of Representatives with the per pupil payment frozen at \$10,036. While it is true that the American Rescue Plan will make over \$300M available to North Dakota's K-12 schools, all indications are that none of it will be put into the salary schedule. We understand the reason: once the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) monies are depleted, there will not be enough to sustain even modest increases to



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salary schedules. Without sustained funding, school districts will be forced to RIF teachers, increase class sizes, and offer fewer courses.

For that reason, Chairman Schaible and Senate Education Committee members, ND United would like you to consider a pair of amendments to HB 1388 that would allow school districts to negotiate modest salary increases with the teachers in their employ. The first amendment would include language to increase the per pupil payment by 2% each year of the biennium. We estimate that a 2% increase each year of the biennium would raise the per pupil rate to \$10,237 the first year and to \$10,442 the second year. The approximate cost of this proposal is \$71M.

The second amendment, Mr. Chairman, would dedicate 70% of the increase to teacher salaries. This is not a new idea, of course. Governor John Hoeven signed HB 1400 with the same stipulation at the end of the 2009 legislative session. That legislation was much appreciated by teachers and administrators alike.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, North Dakota's teachers have worked tirelessly to make sure their students continued to thrive under very difficult circumstances. When schools were closed to students a year ago, teachers worked with administrators and education support professionals to create and implement distance learning protocols so that kids could keep learning at a high level. They struggled to maintain a sense of community for their students so that their kids knew that they were valued, important, and loved. All of us involved in education-teachers, administrators, and school board members- agree that our teachers have repeatedly gone the extra mile to support student learning. Passing HB 1388, with the amendments I suggested, would go a very long way to let teachers know their work is valued, and that they are valued, too. Please amend and recommend a DO PASS recommendation for HB 1388. I am happy to stand for any questions.