

Senate Bill 2215 Testimony

Good morning Chairman Schaible, members of the education committee, and all others present. My name is Landen Schmeichel and I am proud to be an educator here in Bismarck, ND. I am here today to offer testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 2215.

As an educator I see the outcome of Senate Bill 2215 negatively impacting the people I care about the most: my students. Along with centralizing what should be local control over negotiations and contracts, this bill would also diminish the ameliorative time that educators and, more specifically, educators representing educators have to bargain in order to empower the lives of every K-12 learner across the state.

Senate Bill 2215 is a quixotic solution to a non-problem. By shortening the time frame for negotiations, the bill would deprive educators of the time and means necessary to ensure college and career readiness for their students. Education is not just about designing cogent preparation for the demands of a 21st century world, but is also about invigorating and motivating all students who leave our schools with the skills and knowledge ready to adapt to any change or challenge. Negotiations provide educators the salient vehicle in which to ensure that their workplaces and schools equip them to do just that. With this bill's passage, one particular stakeholder group would be effectively silenced, and unfortunately for learners in ND, that group would be educators — the group that has the greatest insight as to how to provide effective and quality instruction.

In a state that champions local government and small-town resolutions, Senate Bill 2215 argues the antithesis of ND's values. Arbitrary negotiation caps derived from particularly contentious and extreme circumstances of negotiations composed and in reaction by the ND State Legislature for negotiations are in response to the exception, and certainly not the rule of negotiations throughout our great state. SB 2215 would strip local control from local teachers, and this is the opposite approach that is typically championed by

stolid conservatives. Moreover, in a state that typically seeks to discourage government involvement, SB 2215 betrays those values, entrusting the process to fraternity at the legislature, rather than the proven grit and intelligence of local teachers and leaders.

According to recent polling, only 38% of teachers between ages 30-39 plan to teach until retirement. At a time when teachers have navigated through perhaps the most challenging time in American history for educators and questions about teacher retention should be of paramount concern to those who legislate, it is unequivocally not the right moment to introduce legislation that would limit their ability to appeal for the needs of their students. We must refute policies and procedures that silence the voice of local leadership and classroom empowerment and focus on supporting educators across our state in order that they can empower the generations that follow. Embracing opposition to SB 2215 does exactly that.

With a legislative session concluding in either the late fourth or early fifth month of this year, a June deadline for negotiations is unrealistic and untimely. As an educator of US History, I understand that the most important feature of producing quality products or outcomes includes the purposeful time spent in the classroom researching and negotiating perspectives. Much like students, teachers and local leaders need quality time to create the most meaningful experiences possible to not only prepare, but to also propel students into a successful future. Furthermore, the end of the year for educators is packed full of deadlines; teachers serving in negotiation processes would only be further stressed and constrained by the language of 2215. The arbitrary deadline would put all stakeholders — ND School Boards, administrators, and educators — in a time constriction that would destroy the intentional and integral necessity of negotiations in our state. In opposing SB 2215, please join me in the work that my colleagues and I engage in everyday — ensuring that our students have the skills, resources and knowledge at hand to navigate a complicated world. Please join me in denouncing a bill that is unnecessary and strikes at the heart of a process that is designed to assist in creating a future we will all continue to

share. Thank you for your time; I would be happy to stand for any questions related to my remarks.

Contact information:

Landen J. Schmeichel

330 Saturn Dr.

Bismarck, ND 58503

landenjames33@gmail.com

701-425-6294

