



1 **HB 1187**

2 **Testimony in support**

3 Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee. For the record
4 my name is Dr. Aimee Copas – I am here representing the North Dakota Council
5 Leaders supporting all the school administrators and school leaders in K12 across the
6 state. I come to you with support and a suggested amendment to HB 1187 regarding
7 Bonus Payments.

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9 Schools find themselves in an interesting situation. K12 public education...if you
10 considered it as a singular entity, public education is the largest employer in North
11 Dakota. Legislative investment in public education is truly an investment in workforce.
12 There are an inordinate number of restrictions on the entities when considering them
13 from a business operations standpoint and as an employer.

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15 Private industry is provided the ability to incentivize and recruit individuals into harder
16 to fill positions. They can reward employees for taking on additional work or tasks at
17 their discretion. Schools have limited ability to do some of those same things, thereby
18 making them an employer that finds themselves in a corner when it comes to
19 competing with private industry for workers. Couple that with a shortage of
20 employees in several areas whether it is a specific teacher opening, areas where support
21 staff are needed, etc., increased employer flexibility in today’s working world is of
22 paramount importance to your largest employer in the state.

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24 What this bill does is loosens the current restriction in place in law within the
25 authority of school boards to offer signing bonuses. By “signing” we simply mean the

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for all students in North Dakota.*

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1 agreement via contract to complete said work via employment. These amendments
2 would allow for a school to offer to a current employee a signing bonus when they take
3 on a new role within a district. The amount of time that is available to stretch that
4 bonus out is also lengthened from 3 to 5 years. This is a great benefit to smaller
5 schools as well as they grapple with small staffs and the need to incentivize to get staff
6 members to backfill needed positions and work in the district.

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8 Protections are in place in this bill which are important. Some of these protections are:

- 9 • Bonus is not subject to being included in salary for continued contracting
- 10 • Is not included in the district salary schedule
- 11 • To prevent poaching from neighboring school districts, that employee must have
12 been in that district for 2 years before being deemed eligible for that bonus.

13 Example of how this might be used (this list is not exhaustive):

- 14 • Current employee in building willing to take coursework to become certified in a
15 critical shortage area in that district – bonus to incentivize said adjustment and
16 effort.
- 17 • Current employee in building willing or volunteering to take on other role in
18 building in an area of need that is additional to their current workload. Bonus
19 to incentivize.

20 We ask that you consider this testimony as you discuss and vote on this bill.