

Testimony House Bill 1201 – House Education Committee

Representative Heinert, Chairman

January 18, 2023

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dr. Alyssa Martin. I am the director of the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (CDE) and oppose this bill.

CDE has only twelve full-time teachers. Each is required to teach 600 enrollments annually, with some exceeding this threshold. In short, our teachers serve a very large number of students on a statewide basis. We at CDE have always afforded our teachers the courtesy and flexibility to leave their employment with us for another pursuit, believing that when our teachers have the desire to seek outside work, it would **not** be in their interest or the best interest of our students to hold them to a contract. While our teacher retention rate has been very stable, if we are faced with a vacancy mid-year, we need the option to open the vacancy and hire the best-qualified candidate for the job, which may be a North Dakota teacher currently under contract. This allows us to continue to serve schools statewide and avoid capping enrollments or limiting the courses in which a student can enroll. We understand the pressure and constraints that this may place on local school districts to fill a vacancy mid-year since these are the very same issues we experience when we have a vacancy and a natural part of employee churn in other industries. Again, CDE's need to hire a full-time teacher mid-year is limited and rare, but we hope to have the ability to hire the best teacher when this need arises. We do not actively recruit from within our local schools, simply following the state process for hiring an employee and selecting the best candidate for the position based on state protocols and the pool that applies. We also do not understand the need for this law since local school boards already have the authority to adopt a policy on the rules and reasons related to releasing a teacher from a contract early. CDE opposes HB 1201 for these reasons.