



**Richland County Office Of  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

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*Dr. Timothy W. Tharp, County Superintendent*

January 20, 2023

To the members of the North Dakota House Education Committee,

I am writing to express my strongest opposition to House Bill 1251. I am a career educator having worked for 25 years in the State of Montana when I retired as the Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction. After retirement and becoming a full-time pastor, I came out of retirement to help out a rural district in western North Dakota—Golva Elementary, or legally, Lone Tree School District. During this same time, I also served as an elected school board member in Savage, Montana.

Today, I am the elected County Superintendent of Schools in Richland County, Montana. In addition to that, I serve as a gubernatorial appointee on the Montana Board of Public Education and am the chair of that body's Accreditation Committee. We are the ones in Montana who set the minimum ratios of administrators and other school personnel and leave it up to the local control of school boards to decide if they want to go above and beyond in hiring more personnel. I am writing you to share my experience and expertise on both sides of the Mon-Dak and to offer expert testimony in serving as an administrator in rural schools in both states. One of the schools that I now oversee here in Montana has four students---so trust me, I understand rural.

While in Golva, this small school had 36 students during my two years (2020-21 and 2021-22). I served as a half-time administrator taking on the roles of Superintendent and Principal in addition to filling in as cook, secretary, custodian, and bus driver when necessary. As a retired Deputy State Superintendent with four college degrees including a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and 17 years of experience in administration, I believe that I brought much more experience to that role than would be typical for a tiny rural elementary. Anyone who knows me can testify to my efficiency and knowledge of paperwork, grants, and compliance issues, but it STILL required me to work about half-time just to stay on top of all of the paperwork requirements demanded by the state and federal governments while simultaneously trying to be of service to the staff, students, and board. Mix in that we also had our Cognia accreditation review during my tenure in Golva and I can assure you that there is no way that the job could have been accomplished by simply mashing small schools together into lumps of 475 students. By the way, we were identified as one of only two Cognia Schools of Distinction in North Dakota during my time at Lone Tree.

Please oppose HB 1251.....it is short-sighted and will destroy rural schools in North Dakota.

Sincerely,



Dr. Timothy W. Tharp  
Richland County Superintendent of Schools