

January 22, 2023

Representative Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Stacy Duffield. I graduated from a rural North Dakota school and taught English in two small, rural schools in ND. I have worked my entire career as an educator in ND, first in the service of K12 schools and then in preparing educators for ND's K12 classrooms.

I am writing in **opposition** to HB1251 for the following reasons.

- **Local control** is a hallmark of ND education, whereby local school boards and the communities they represent are empowered to make decisions to best serve their children based upon deep understandings of the stakeholders they serve. HB1251 overrides local authority in regard to one of the most important and impactful educational decisions—the leadership that guides and supports their school.
- Decisions about consolidations and shared services need to be approached thoughtfully—not in a rushed and forced manner—to do what is best for the students and other stakeholders. **Rushed and forced decisions** are likely to result in instability, creating stress and untenable working and learning conditions. We are already experiencing an **unprecedented teacher shortage**, and this bill is likely to further exacerbate that problem.
- It is common for rural superintendents to hold **multiple roles** for the district, often as principal, school bus driver, substitute teacher, and more. These roles will still need to be met, **negating the cost savings** predicted as a premise of HB 1251.
- The rural nature of ND and size of many districts will require a single superintendent **to oversee multiple schools covering a large geographical area**. The superintendent will only be able to be in buildings possibly once a week, or even once every two weeks, decreasing effectiveness, and increasing the **need to hire additional onsite leadership**.
- **Hiring superintendents for such roles will be very difficult** because of the extreme amount of travel and responsibilities for numerous buildings, staff, and students, especially given the proposed salary cap.
- The **cost of travel** will also need to be figured in, again negating most, if not all of the bill's purported cost savings.
- The **argument of large districts having a superintendent for multiple buildings is a false equivalency** because these districts are staffed with extensive networks of administration including assistant superintendents, curriculum coordinators, instructor support staff, deans of students, and more. If these systems need to be put in place to make a single superintendent possible, there will be no cost savings.

Sincerely,

Stacy Duffield
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