

1251 Testimony

Chairman Heinert and members of the ND House Education Committee, for the record my name is Brandt Dick, President of NDSOS and Burleigh County Superintendent of Schools. I stand to testify in opposition to HB 1251. In my role as Burleigh County Superintendent, I provide support and Superintendent services to Apple Creek, Menoken, Sterling, Naughton, and Manning, yet these five schools do not rise to the level of the 475 students as required by this bill. If this bill were to pass, it would create questions as to whether they would have to work with another school to assure that there is a total of the mandated number of students. Is this bill like the bill that would have required these schools to join a high school district that was defeated in the past?

Language of this bill is very problematic as it is very prescriptive and usurps the authority of local school boards. To dictate what a school district or any political subdivision can allocate in their budget in any area is not something state law should ever do. If this bill would pass, where would this stop? Could the next step be to assure that no more than 1.5% of any city budget be allocated to any one salary? Local school boards and elected officials are elected to make that decision when budgets are passed and to take away that ability to make decisions is extremely problematic.

For three years I served as ½ time Superintendent of HMB and Underwood. While it worked, the larger school district-in terms of students-Underwood, eventually wanted me their full time, to be more available at activities and be more present. To set an arbitrary number for a full-time Superintendent has nothing to do with what is best for the community and ultimately the students. Underwood had two Principals when I was originally hired as a 1/2-time Superintendent, and when one retired, the structure was changed to have a one Principal for PK-12, and at that time it was appreciated that I would come on as full-time Superintendent/AD and teach one class of College Algebra. The following school year I ended up driving an afternoon bus route as we were not able to find anyone else to fill that position.

When I left HMB, the board of HMB then adjusted back to hiring someone to serve as Superintendent/Principal to fill their administration position. Most small schools across the state of ND do not have a full time Superintendent which makes the rationale for this bill a false premise, money will not be saved.

Local school boards do take into consideration who they have in leadership, and what they feel is best for their community and school. They are elected to make these decisions. Why should the state take that authority and decision-making ability away from those that live in the school district and are elected to make those decisions. I will close with this question for thought, who will make better decisions for a school district, legislators and elected officials in Bismarck, or residents of each community and school board members elected by parents, teachers, and local taxpayers? Please vote No on HB 1251.