

Thank you for the opportunity to be here. My name is **Ty Dressler**. I am a Small Business Owner, a Rancher, and School Board Vice-President for the Richardton-Taylor School District. I'm here to urge a DO NOT PASS recommendation from your committee on House Bill 1251.

First, I'd like to touch on the idea of any sort of cost-savings. Our district has approximately 325 students PreK-12. We have a Superintendent making just over \$100,000 a year before benefits. He often works 50 hours/week and occasionally 80 hours/week when the job calls for it. This bill would not change the workload necessary to run our school. We would still have Superintendent tasks performed, and a qualified person to perform them. Qualified employees cost money, and **removing** one, or forcing us to **share** one that is already spread quite thin, just means we'll need to go out and hire another person and give him or her a different title. Like any other business, schools need a strong CEO, a leader, and if you remove our ability to attract, hire, and retain the CEO of our school, you are setting us up for failure.

In promotion of this bill, there was a pie chart showing all these small school districts and how few total students are located in those areas. They reference the extra costs and inefficiencies associated with these smaller districts. However, many things cost more per capita in smaller, rural communities. Things like fiber for internet, ambulance services, and electricity, all cost more to reach someone in a rural community. Does that mean those services shouldn't be provided to them? Should everyone just live in the largest cities of our state? Who then will be tasked with growing our food? Or producing our energy? Are you wishing for fewer family farms, and just giving into Corporate Farming that we've blocked for years? Our entire state is considered a rural state, especially when compared to those on the East Coast. I'm sure we receive WAY more federal funding per capita than many of these states. Funding from the Farm Bill, funding for transportation. Is that wrong too?

When evaluating a proposed bill, you must always identify what problem you are trying to address. There is no pressing issue that this will address successfully. We've established that cost-savings isn't one of them. Therefore, you must also look at the intent or motivation behind the bill. This is where much of my concern lies. It is evident to many, that the true intent here is one step towards forced school district consolidation, and the old idea, shot down years ago, of creating super districts. The idea of super districts means closing schools and harming communities, leading to drastic ripple effects to our economy and quality of life in these areas.

We actually tried splitting a superintendent about 30 years ago. The towns of Richardton and Taylor maintained their own school boards, while splitting a Superintendent. He answered to two boards, he prepared for two board meetings, he left one school without oversight so he could spend time at the other, he was travelling instead of working, and, quite frankly, he became burnt out. I can't imagine being one of the districts that would need to share one person with 3 or even 4 locations. It is a recipe for ineffective leadership and very costly, very frequent turnover.

Our focus, our duty, is to provide the best education possible for the students of our state. It is evident that this bill will undermine that mission, by forcing changes, and removing the local control that everyone in this room believes is so important in our daily lives. Please vote NO on HB 1251. Thank you.