



# North Dakota Small Organized Schools

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HB 1251 – Testimony in Opposition  
House Education Committee  
Representative Heinert – Chairman  
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Representative Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Michael Heilman. I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). I represent 150-member school districts of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. NDSOS stands in opposition to HB 1251.

NDSOS believe that this bill undermines local control and decision making. There is currently no roadblocks or state regulations that prohibits school districts from sharing administration if they choose and there are districts that have chosen to share superintendents as you will hear in later testimony. I have heard that because the state provides a large portion of school funding the state should have more control. The problem with that line of thinking is misunderstanding that the state money somehow belongs to state government and not the people of the state. NDSOS believe that tax dollars supporting education is the people’s money. We have all benefited from the state being able to provide property tax relief, thank you for that, but once the money has been distributed via the school funding formula it becomes the locally elected school boards responsibility manage.

Our school superintendents in our small schools wear many hats and work long hours. They often also are the school principal, athletic director, classroom teachers, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, tutors... the list goes on. Forcing the sharing of superintendents will certainly move these responsibilities to another individual within the school. As a county superintendent I have worked with small schools with teaching principals and most of them are phenomenal, but the reality is that the teacher/principal is

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**The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.**

often pulled from their classrooms and in the end the children suffer. Communities want their superintendents to be visible in the school, at school events, provide assistance to teachers and staff, get to know the students, and become a part of the community. Sharing makes this difficult at best.

It may not be the intent but, it feels like another way force consolidations or even dissolutions. Local school boards have been making the difficult decision to consolidate or dissolve since early in our state's history. We once had 4700 schools in North Dakota. In 1985 we had 300 school districts, in 2000 we were down to 230, and 184 in 2010 and today we have 170. It may not be happening as fast as some may like, but local school board have and will continue to make the decision that is best for them when the time is right.

North Dakota Small Organized Schools believes in local control and the decision to share a superintendent and superintendent compensation is up to the locally elected school board and urges a do not pass recommendation on HB 1251

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