



RICHLAND #44 SCHOOL DISTRICT

Abercrombie – Christine – Colfax – Galchutt

Staci Schmitz
Elementary Principal

Britney Gandhi
Superintendent/Jr-Sr High Principal

Kendra Dockter
Business Manager

*Educating students to be
responsible citizens and leaders*

www.richland44.com

Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Dr. Britney Gandhi. I am the superintendent and high school principal for the Richland #44 School District where I have worked since I moved to North Dakota in 2018. I was previously a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal in two different states. I have come to love North Dakota: its people, its close-knit communities, and the culture within and across both Class A and Class B schools.

House Bill 1251 appears to have the positive intent of redistributing perceived excess funds to well-deserving teachers, but that is not the reality in my school district and many others. This bill will not give the teachers in my district the dollars that are advertised and will negatively affect our children.

The Richland #44 School District serves 275 students in the four communities of Colfax, Abercrombie, Galchutt and Christine. Historically we have had three administrators: two principals and a superintendent. In 2019 our school board did the tough work required of school boards around the country by examining the budget and identifying areas that could be tightened. Through much discussion, research, and planning, they decided that we could consolidate three of our administrator positions into two and the following year I added the role of superintendent.

Serving as both a superintendent and a high school principal is not easy and is not always ideal – nor is it something that will work for all districts. However, this shift has worked for our school district to maximize funds for our students.

If this bill is passed, Richland #44 will have to hire a high school administrator. The authors of the bill are telling teachers that this will give each of them an average of an additional \$4,600; that is misleading and false for Richland #44 teachers. This bill will not give our teachers nearly that amount of extra funds based on the calculations we have done; additionally, the school principals will have to assume superintendent duties throughout the week which will have a trickle-down effect on our teachers and students.

Aside from the misconception of saved funds, this bill will drive away superintendents from North Dakota. Every state in the country is looking for qualified school district leaders and would happily take our best and brightest. Let's keep our talent within the state while having discussions with superintendents and their boards about how to get creative with finances like my school board did in Richland #44.

I know we all want what is best for the children in North Dakota. I urge you to not pass this bill because it is not in the best interest of the children in my school district nor in most across the state.

I thank you for your dedication to the children in North Dakota through your important work, in particular your focus serving on the education committee. Thank you for your time.