

I am writing today in support of House Bill NO. 1491. I would like to disclose that I am the Child Nutrition Director for Bismarck Public Schools, however, I am submitting this testimony as the Legislative Chair on behalf of the North Dakota School Nutrition Association (NDSNA). NDSNA supports feeding all students at no charge.

Child Nutrition Professionals across ND experienced firsthand the benefits of providing healthy meals at no charge to families. Many of our families are just over the threshold of receiving free or reduced-price meals and would benefit greatly if our state could assist them, especially during this difficult time of record-high inflation. Studies show that students that are well-fed learn better, have better test scores, and have reduced behavior issues. Allowing all students to eat for free of charge reduces the stigma that is put on these students who are of lower income level.

NDSNA knows that free meals increases our participation, especially at breakfast. Higher meal participation means a greater amount of entitlement dollars from the federal government that can be used to purchase commodities, some of these being ND products.

There are many details to work out with this bill but feeding our students at no charge is the first step in the right direction. NDSNA is a resource that can be used if you should have any questions. We ask that you please consider passing bill 1491 for the future of our students.

Sincerely,

Michelle Wagner, RD, SNS

Legislative Chair, NDSNA