



1 Testimony in Opposition

2 SB 2254 – Chronically Low Performing Schools

3 Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education committee, my name is Dr.
4 Aimee Copas, and I am the Executive Director for the North Dakota Council of
5 Educational Leaders representing school leaders across North Dakota.

6 As school leaders, we come to you with grave concerns about the extreme overreach of
7 this bill suggests and push of authority to the executive branch as outlined in the bill
8 and the ability for them to completely override local control of the locally elected
9 positions. The greatest level of concern we have is outlined in the final ¼ of the bill.

10 Prior to the last ¼ as referenced this bill is basically outlining the supports NDDPI
11 provides to CSI and TSI schools. However, it takes the authority and broadens it
12 tremendously. These schools already must do mandated training and receive supports
13 from NDDPI, REA’s and other organization. It is most certainly appropriate to assist
14 and support while locals still run their schools and make decisions. It is not the job of
15 the state department to intervene. In this instance, the state superintendent would be
16 given the authority to override and supersede the locally elected officials, the
17 administration and would be given the authority to make decisions impacting an entire
18 district. In some instances in one our urban communities we have one school out of
19 many (usually a high level of poverty) who are in this status. This bill would grant the
20 authority of this elected position to override the entire district. This would be the case
21 for Bismarck, Mandan, Fargo, Grand Forks, Williston, West Fargo as well as a handful
22 of smaller schools due to a year where one school building is in the bottom 10-15%. I
23 ask you – is this appropriate?



1 This bill would allow this elected official (regardless of qualifications – remembering
2 that the state superintendent isn't a person but a position). When we make laws about
3 positions in government, please be mindful to do so not so much regarding the person
4 in office, but the position. The person in that role in the future could be wonderful,
5 horrible, average, or anywhere in between. In North Dakota we've prided ourselves to
6 believe in our locally elected leaders, to believe in our teachers and our schools and
7 their ability to respond. I would hope that belief set has not changed. This level of
8 overreach is no different than the federal government reaching its hands into North
9 Dakota and telling locally elected legislators what they can and should do and to have
10 them take over here at any level. A parallel could be that the federal government isn't
11 pleased with our performance in green energy, so they come in and takeover and usurp
12 all elected legislators, and replace them with individuals they want, hire, and fire, and
13 determine the pathway with no regard to those in the community who have been
14 elected and entrusted with the job. I am confident in each of you that you will not
15 allow national rhetoric influence how you view our North Dakota teachers, educational
16 leaders, and schools.

17 Please vote to keep the authority where it belongs by voting no on this bill. Keep the
18 authority with the locally elected officials. Encourage the support of all the agencies
19 who can support struggling schools, but we implore that this is done in the most
20 appropriate manner.