

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am Kelly Bradfield, currently serving as the Mandaree Public School Board President. I wish for this testimony to serve in opposition to SB 2254.

In viewing the hearings from the Senate Committee, the origin of SB2254 was initiated and created for the sake of economic sustainment of one community in North Dakota based on that community's Reading and Math scores in one school in their district. Nowhere in the introduction of the bill did I hear anything regarding the general concern of the educating of the students statewide until it that was used for support in getting this passed the State Senate. However, the bill states that DPI, namely the Superintendent of Public Instruction, will be able to intervene directly when a public school is a chronically low-performing school, basically stating that those schools who are under the Comprehensive School Continuous Improvement Plan and as Native American schools were are inadequate of educating our children.

Most recently, I have heard the term "Balcony View" from Superintendent Baesler on other data she shared with committee members. In my opinion, I see this bill as an anti-poverty, anti-Native American bill and is the "Balcony View" of what our reservation schools face in providing high-quality education to our Native American children, based on one set of data.

Under Option A, this bill will allow the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop an improvement plan which may include a directive to require the schools funding to be held in escrow, which in my understanding, will eliminate the Mandaree Community from having local control of their school district and the education of their students, their children, and their future.

Should the Superintendent of Public Instruction choose what is identified as option B: school district annexation, consolidation, or closure. Any of these choices would take the heart out of our small reservation community. Our school is and always has been the heart of our small rural reservation community. Being as rural as we are, our school closing would immensely impact many of our student's ability to attend school and maintain ESSA-required attendance regulations, thus, causing more unnecessary hardship for our Native American families.

Under Option C, the Superintendent of Public Instruction can make changes to the curriculum, training, instruction, assessment or the school calendar. When change is forced or mandated upon a society without considering key factors such as cultural diversity, socioeconomic status, and the availability of resources to maintain such changes, the outcome will be disastrous.

Lastly, this bill's Option D states that the Superintendent of Public Instruction can reassign or hire school or school district staff to fill roles associated with the school or school district's needs. Our need as a school for highly qualified administration, highly qualified teaching staff, and highly qualified paraprofessionals is a daily reality. We have been without a school counselor for well over four years. We have been without a high school principal for over a year. We have also been advertising for a school nurse for over three years. We currently advertise for

Special Education Paraprofessionals, CTE teachers, an Art Teacher, and General Education Paraprofessionals. When posting job openings, we are competing with much larger schools that are in urban areas where highly qualified educators tend to want to work. It is not new news that we have a shortage of teachers, and getting licensed in North Dakota is not the most straightforward task for those holding teaching licenses from other states.

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, I have heard the words "working collaboratively together" in past testimony. Where in this bill does it allow for that to happen when all that is seen with this bill is the condemnation and the absence of recognition of what is working successfully in our school? I have not seen any data showing the hard work and dedication our current staff strives to provide for our students.

Where is the data presented to show how school district staff support our students in the community of learning versus a once-a-year standardized state assessment?

I am not against the Department of Public Instruction helping support the education of our students; however, to be blunt, that is why they have the Continuous School Improvement Plan which DPI approves before funding is released. This allows DPI to have input and make recommendations for educating our Native American children. Through this process, Department of Public Instruction should have an established active role and work to support the school.

In conclusion, I strongly encourage you to vote NO on SB2254.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, this concludes my prepared testimony, and I will stand for any questions you may have.