

**3/3/2023**

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

My family is writing you today to show our support of Senate Bill 2328. My family has been a part of the Hope and Page communities for 5 generations. We support the communities in many ways, but our drive to support these communities stems from the education system that we have been fortunate to be a part of in the past, as well as currently.

As a family, we have experienced other school districts, much larger than the Hope-Page school district. In 2021, we open enrolled our children, now age 8, 6, and 4, to the Hope-Page school district and am proud to say it was one of the best decisions regarding education that we have made. Since joining the Hope-Page school district, we have noticed a remarkable change in educational experiences and outcomes of our children. All our children require individual education plans for a variety of reasons- bilateral cochlear implants, visual deficits, speech impairments, and physical delays. Although our children were on IEPs at their previous school district, the Hope-Page school has provided my children with genuinely *individualized* education plans. They have not been labeled as a class of IEP students and have made tremendous strides since starting here. I strongly believe this is due to the smaller, more intricate school system and the personalized education they have been provided.

Not only is the Hope-Page school district able to focus on students with IEPs on a more detailed level, but they are different from other school districts in that they are able to be able to do this for the whole student body. This school system strives to provide education for all students at all ages and levels, from incorporating a Pre-K program to start education at a younger age to providing opportunities for dual credit courses that allows for High School students to prepare for their post high-school educations. Education is the backbone to success and school districts, like Hope-Page, that are able to meet the needs of all students on an individual basis, are essential to the success of North Dakota communities.

Without SB 2328, the Hope-Page school district is projected to lose nearly 1/3 of their budget. With a budget loss of this size, there is a high likelihood that the school district would not be able to sustain operations in the next 3-5 years. A loss of this magnitude will affect students, staff, and the community of Hope and Page, as well as other surrounding communities that are fortunate to be members of the Hope-Page school district. On a personal level, I feel that without this bill, the ability to have genuinely individualized education plans will be limited if not cease to exist, which will directly affect my children's outcomes, as well as any other students on an IEPs.

Children are not only the future of these rural communities but are the future of North Dakota. Cutting funding for rural schools will not only affect the students, staff, and communities today, but will affect the future North Dakota as a whole.

For the future of our students, of rural communities, and the future of North Dakota, your review and support of Senate Bill 2328 is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued commitment and dedication to North Dakota.



**Ross and Amber Thykeson**

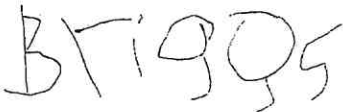
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Legislative District #29



**Brecka Thykeson, age 8**



**Briggs Thykeson, age 6**



**Bella Thykeson, age 4**