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SB 2380
House Education | March 15
Testimony of Alexis Baxley

Good morning, Chairman Heinert, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Alexis Baxley, and I serve as the executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents the elected school boards of all 170 public school districts and several special education units in North Dakota.

The North Dakota School Boards Association stands in support of SB 2380. The incentive in this section of code has been discussed a lot this session, so I would like to share a little bit about my experience with it. You have heard me share before about the assistance my organization provides to members in hiring superintendents. That assistance is largely administrative in nature – we do not recruit as part of the service – which means I often end up working with many of our smallest rural districts. These are districts that greatly value quality administrative leadership, but usually understand that they may need to be a little more creative than other districts to fill the role.

Between the 21-22 and 22-23 school years, I counted at least 25 districts that were looking for a new superintendent at some point. I may have missed some, but even so, it was a higher than usual number. At least four districts inquired with me about the sharing incentive in NDCC § 15.1-27.16. All were disappointed when they learned that to benefit from the incentive, they must share a superintendent AND a business manager with at least one other district. Some readily understood that while sharing one of these positions could be manageable, having a part time employee in both would be very difficult. Others already had longtime business managers that are excellent at their positions that they did not want to lose. Business managers don't always get the credit that they deserve; these individuals manage many of the most technical aspects of running a school district: payroll, purchasing, open records requests, etc. Managing these time sensitive tasks for multiple districts would be difficult.

While one of the districts that I worked with did go on to share a superintendent, they were unable to take advantage of the cost-sharing incentive. I believe more of my districts would have further considered the potential of sharing had the program been an OR situation like SB 2380 looks to create. I cannot say for sure that they would have ultimately decided to go that route, but I believe the changes in SB 2380 are a positive step forward in making this program work for school districts. I urge you to give SB 2380 a do-pass recommendation, and I would stand for any questions. Thank you.