

March 21, 2023

Members of the House Human Services Committee:

I am writing today in strong opposition to SB 2260 and ask that you render a do not pass result, as well as no votes on the floor. As an educator and life-long resident of North Dakota, I am deeply concerned about the detrimental ramifications to our education system in the state of North Dakota, specifically regarding teacher retention, if this bill is to be enacted into law.

I have been an English teacher at Grafton Public Schools for seven years, and I am passionate about educating and serving the students and families in my community. Since beginning my teaching journey, I have earned a Master of Education degree in English and a Graduate Certificate in Communication Studies. Additionally, I have had the privilege of participating in and leading multiple district-wide initiatives and professional development opportunities for my district and others in the state. As a testament to my work, I was awarded Grafton Kiwanis Teacher of the Year in 2020. Most importantly, I pride myself in building strong relationships with students and their families to best impact student success.

However, none of this happens without countless hours of working outside of my contracted time, going above and beyond the line of duty. I teach three separate courses over six class periods. I have approximately 100 minutes of prep time throughout my day, though often this time is spent meeting with students to offer additional educational support or providing substitute coverage for absent teachers. I use the prep time that I have to plan lessons, set up my classroom for learning, upload work to Google Classroom, and provide students with ample feedback on coursework. While 100 minutes sounds like a long time, it goes quickly. I typically do not have enough time during the working day to support my students as much as they deserve. This is not unique to me. Most educators work off the clock to meet the demands of the job, all in the sake of providing students with a high quality, state mandated standards-based education. Many of the requirements and additional expectations for how teachers complete their work in SB 2260 will take valuable prep time away from instructors to the detriment of student learning.

A reality of teaching is creating instructional material and content “on the fly” to meet the needs of learners. For example, last week I was teaching my seniors about APA citation style. I lectured, provided students with notes, and then had them complete an assignment. I assessed their work from home that evening and found that they needed more help with their ability to create references, so I developed new instructional material for the following morning. This very typical yet necessary and timely adjustment to my lesson plans would be in direct violation of SB 2260 section 2.1.b. Waiting one week to have these new instructional materials approved by families would not be in the best interests of my students’ learning.

Right now is not the time to develop legislation that will increase the workload of teachers. It is no secret that there is a major teacher shortage in the United States. Daily, teachers are choosing to leave the profession due to numerous factors outside of legislative control. While I consider my vocation to be teaching, it has crossed my mind that I may have a better work-life balance in another profession. Unfortunately, SB 2260, specifically section two, will encourage myself and others to leave education in the state of North Dakota, if not education altogether.

It is my understanding that SB 2260 was introduced to provide families with more transparency about their child's education. I fully believe that families have the right and responsibility to engage with their child's education. In fact, I encourage parents to do so; one of my favorite aspects of my job is talking with families about what their students are learning and achieving in my classroom. This line of communication is open for families at any time, as per current school policy and open records law. SB 2260 will create additional and unnecessary work and stress for teachers, as formally writing lesson plans is an incredibly time-consuming task. A teacher's role and primary responsibility is to educate kids, not cross off boxes of red tape. For an educator to remain a teacher in North Dakota under the passing of SB 2260, teachers will need to find ways to cut corners in order to have time to complete the new legal requirements of the job. Unfortunately, this cut corner will likely result in a lower-quality education for North Dakotan youth.

Please support the teachers and students of North Dakota by placing confidence in trained and highly qualified teachers and administrators and voting no to SB 2260. If you have any questions about myself or my classroom, please contact me. I love speaking to interested individuals about the education profession and the realistic joys and challenges that come with working in a school system. I appreciate your time and consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

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