SB 2328 - Relating to Weighting Factors for Rural Schools   02/06/2023

Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Senate,

My name is Seth Engelstad and I am the superintendent of the North Border School District. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2328. This is my first year as a superintendent and my first year working for the North Border School District. I have been in the education field for 22 years and have been blessed to work with so many wonderful communities, students, and co-workers. I have seen our schools take on many roles, and responsibilities over the years. Education has seen some major hardships and this year is no exception.

Senate Bill 2328 will provide North Border with some much-needed funding to help soften the blow from our current revenue loss from being a transition minimum school. Each year until we are on the funding formula, we will see a 15% drop in revenue. So far, we have had to absorb around $600,000 and by 2028 we will have to take on an additional 1.4 million dollar deduction in funding. This loss represents around a 1/3 of our budget.

The North Border School district was originally made up of three districts, Walhalla, Neche, and Pembina. The three districts became one in 2005, and the Neche school was closed in 2016. The Walhalla and Pembina schools are 35 miles apart and our district covers 546 square miles. We have worked very hard to be fiscally responsible and consolidate to better serve our students and community. Without bill 2328 there is no chance for North Border to operate both plants effectively.

Even if Senate Bill 2328 passes, North Border will continue to see a drop in funding over the next 5 years and our district will not see revenue close to what we currently have for many years to come. I urge you to vote for this bill and stand by districts like ours who have consolidated, been fiscally responsible, and promote what's best for our students and stakeholders.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We greatly appreciate your support and understanding. I would be happy to address any questions that you may have.

                         Seth Engelstad